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The preciousness of God's
thoughts

The Preciousness
of God's Thoughts



G. PARSONS NICHOLS

The Preciousness of God's Thoughts

Sermons and Addresses

By
✓
G. PARSONS NICHOLS, D.D.

With a Memoir



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Memoir

Memoir.

Gideon Parsons Nichols was born on July 30, 1837, in Windsor, Massachusetts, a village in the Berkshire hills, near Pittsfield. His father was Abiel Nichols, a farmer and blacksmith, and his mother was Jerusha Knight Parsons, both of New England blood for generations. They had only this child, and the mother died when he was two and a half years old. Soon after the father married his first wife's sister, who was in every possible way indeed a mother to the boy.

He was a rather extraordinary child. He learned to read at the age of four, his textbooks being a child's tin plate bearing the letters of the alphabet and the words on the kitchen stove. He used to go to the village grocery store in the evenings, and in return for a handful of raisins, which were sweetmeats to him, perched on a cracker-barrel he would read the Bible to a group of men. His mother seemed to see that the boy had a more than ordinary aptitude for books, and she did her utmost to encourage him in his studies. Though she knew nothing of Latin, she insisted that Parsons (as he was always called by his intimates) learn it, and with pathetic ludicrousness she had him recite to her untaught ears.

Youth brought to him little of the freedom and joy that come to most young men. For some months of the year he spent part of the day in the school-

house, but during the rest of the time he helped on the farm—and only those who know the Berkshires know what farming there means. One of the few things on which he ever prided himself was his speed in mowing with the scythe. Besides his farm-work he helped in the cooking and the care of the house, because his mother had become an invalid, tortured by chronic rheumatism. The expenses of her long illness straitened Abiel Nichols' means, and cost the son what seemed his only chance of further education. But when he was seventeen years old a door opened to him.

His uncle, the Reverend James Nichols, was principal of Temple Hill Academy, at Geneseo, New York. He and his wife (the S. J. N. of the letters hereafter quoted) now offered to receive their nephew under their care, and this made it possible for him to attend the academy, which provided preparation for college. Those who remember the quiet assured air of power with which Dr. Nichols moved in every variety of duty and in many trying and difficult occasions cannot imagine the shyness and reserve of the boy who came to his uncle's rooms in Geneseo for his weekly package of clean clothes—sitting uneasy on the edge of a chair, abashed before the kindest of aunts and his unnoticed little cousins. Hardly a word could his aunt get from him, and it was a source of unfailing regret and self-reproach to her that she could not win him to talk to her as others did. This shyness continued indeed to his manhood, and seemed to him a serious objection to his becoming a minister. “How can I

ever go into a house uninvited? How can I talk to strangers about their domestic or spiritual concerns?" he would often say. Yet he overcame this sensitive timidity, and became a most faithful, welcome and sympathetic pastor.

His first confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was made in the Presbyterian Church of Geneseo in July of 1855. Next year he transferred his membership to the church at Moscow, New York, where he taught a winter school.

With two years' study he was ready for college. Then the problem was how to get the necessary money. In those days the idea prevailed that a son's earnings until his coming of age belonged to his father; and Abiel Nichols had done much for his son, all that he could do, in letting him go away from the home where he was greatly needed in quest of education. Union College was in the height of its glory at that time, under the presidency of the famous Eliphalet Nott, and the Civil War had not yet cut its attendance in half. His uncle James Nichols had graduated there, and thither the young man determined to go. In the autumn of 1856 he arrived in Schenectady, possessing five dollars and the hope of obtaining a scholarship. This aid was awarded on the basis of work during the first six weeks, so that his five dollars had to carry this aspirant at least this time. It did, and he won the scholarship, but the combination of hard work and little food left him a sickness of several weeks.

At the end of his four years he graduated as vale-

dictorian of a somewhat famous class, that of 1860. In college he was a charter member of the Union chapter of the fraternity of Delta Kappa Epsilon, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. After graduation he taught for two years in the Academy at Warnerville, New York, a town not far from Albany, and it was during his first year there that he determined to enter the Christian ministry, in the Presbyterian Church.

Rev. James Nichols had removed in 1858 from Geneseo to Rochester, and had become principal of the Rochester Female Academy. From that time his nephew's vacations were regularly spent with the family at Rochester, and he became really a member of it, not through any formal adoption, but through that of the mind and heart. His uncle's wife became, as he loved to call her, his mother, and between them there existed the closest intellectual and spiritual sympathy, as regular weekly letters for many years show. In 1862 his uncle went to the war, as Chaplain of the 108th New York State Volunteers, and in 1864 he died at Rochester, of disease contracted in the service. In these circumstances the nephew assumed the cares and duties of an elder son and brother, and gave much assistance in the teaching of the Academy. Later his marriage with his uncle's eldest daughter only made stronger the loving ties already happily formed.

G. P. N. to D. B. N.

Windsor, April, 1861.

.....What shall I say of myself? Teaching in Warner-ville, a new school established last autumn, eighty students the

past term. I seem to have been moderately successful. A petition from the students has been presented desiring to make me principal, which I declined. I have engaged myself for another year. A proposal has just been extended to remain five years. I shall refuse. I hope to commence my studies for the ministry in the fall.

To S. J. N.

Warnerville, May, 1862.

Your letter was a flower and a feast, true to yourself, kind and faithful to me, and withal so discerning and delicate. I am well pleased to be called the child of your adoption, your boy. Well, I will love you and trust you, and perhaps by and by, as you lead me up to higher truths and a better manhood than I now know, my continued delight and increasing strength will give you pleasure, and lend fresh expression to my gratitude. But I am only a child now. I wish I was really a child, or rather I wish I had commenced to love Christ when I was a small, a very small boy—when I was credulous and trustful. That accursed college skepticism, I fear it will creep in and disturb my peace forever.....

To S. J. N.

Warnerville, June, 1862.

.....I cannot get close enough to Christ. I wish you would ask Him to fold me nearer to His bosom.....I think I should like to join the church again by confession, but not yet. What do you think? But I suppose you do not know my heart well enough to say. Write me a very long letter, and love me.

To S. J. N.

Albany, August, 1862.

I go home this afternoon. Please write me there, will you, dear mother, just a little reference to the war. The necessity of the country seems to put aside all private interests, and I think my —. I think I should like to join the church in Rochester, whether I go to the Seminary or elsewhere. I was named First Lieutenant of a company in Warnerville, but resigned for several reasons.

To S. J. N.

Windsor, August, 1862.

It seems a long time since I wrote to you, and I begin to feel how strong an influence both to restrain from sin and to strengthen in steadfast abiding faith in Christ you hold over me. I thank God for you.....As to my letter from Albany—for some weeks I have felt that it was the duty of every man to give his strength to the country, not to pray alone, for God does not work without means often, but to put his right arm forward.....I thought to go from Massachusetts, that my friends might oftener know my whereabouts and whatabouts. I spoke to Father in reference to the matter when I came home, he objected very strongly. If I do not go, and can be of use to you in Rochester, I shall not willingly go to Princeton. That can be discussed when I come to R. the last of this month.

Your fond child,
Parsons.

As these letters show, in his college life their writer had passed through a period of doubts and disregard of some church observances, and he felt it more manly and honorable to his Lord and to himself to make a second public consecration of himself to His service. Accordingly he was received into the communion of the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester in September, 1862. Immediately thereafter he went to Princeton Theological Seminary, to prepare himself for the ministry. He went through the course of three years, and greatly enjoyed his studious life there. During all his time at Princeton most full and beautiful letters were sent regularly to the Rochester home, especially to Mrs. James Nichols.

To S. J. N.

Princeton, Nov., 1863.

.....How infinitely kind of our dear Redeemer to make us even here in some sort partakers of His glory, to use you in so great a degree for my edification, and to use me, though it be ever so little, for your comfort. Yet how unworthy! And how truly says the Apostle "by the foolishness of preaching"! Yet He does so use us, and every day I thank God for you, as I think how much He has used you to build me up, and encourage me to perseverance, and remove my fears. It seems almost that, like the churches of St. Paul, I am the fruit of your hands, your child in Christ.

To S. J. N.

Princeton, Jan., 1865.

.....It is indeed a marvellous way by which God has led me through the instrumentality of kind friends from the hoe and shovel to the study of the glorious gospel. My life ought to be *entirely* consecrated to God for this reason, were there no other. But I never can forget the instruments which God used to accomplish nearly all this. My mother often whispered such things in my ear when I was still young, but the only way she could see by which it could be accomplished was in some way through Uncle James. There is little doubt that that *was* the only way.

Your boy Parsons.

Mr. Nichols was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Rochester City in May, 1865. But an illness with typhoid fever in the autumn of this year interrupted his progress toward the ministry. He declined the call of the Calvary Presbyterian Church of Rochester, and taught in the Academy there, preaching occasionally, until June of 1866. Then he went to the charge of the Presbyterian Church of Victor, New York, a village near Rochester, "my Eden" as

he always called it. It was not until May 1, 1867, that he was ordained to the ministry, in the church of his membership, the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester.

No account of his life would be complete without reference to the great gift of friends to care for him which God granted him in every place. This was especially true in Victor; and those who have derived help and inspiration from his preaching owe it in great measure to the wise and appreciative encouragement of Mr. D. Henry Osborne, without which Mr. Nichols always felt he would have left the ministry. Mr. Osborne's beautiful home was like a father's house to him, and there he was not only the esteemed minister, but also the petted son. Many times during the first year he would say on Sunday night, in real and utter despair, "I can never write another sermon. I shall pack my books in the morning and go back to teaching." "Eat your bread and milk; we will see about that," Mr. Osborne would say. Then after some wise praise he would go on, "Next Sunday night you preach what you preached last Sunday morning. We shall all be glad to heart it. You can think up something for next Sunday morning. Go up to Rochester for a day or two." This programme was literally carried out often during that year. In the second year a blessed revival of God's Spirit came to the church. More than sixty persons, mostly adults, were added to it. And never after that did Mr. Nichols desire to do anything but preach.

The Rochester family were all made most welcome in the Osborne home, and it was there, in June of 1867, that words of betrothal were spoken with Delia B. Nichols. Since her help was needed at home, the marriage was delayed until June of 1871.

To D. B. N.

Victor, Jan., 1868.

I am afraid I shall be disappointed of seeing you this week. I don't know that I should say "I am afraid of being disappointed"—I ought to rejoice that I have such a cause for sacrificing my pleasure. It seems, Darling, as if the wonderful Fire were indeed burning in our hearts. The Week of Prayer was marked by good attendance and a prayerful spirit. Sabbath morning I preached from the parable of the lost sheep. We had a prayer-meeting Sabbath evening before service, and requests were made that meetings for prayer and conference be held during the earlier part of the week. Rather against my judgment I appointed meetings each evening until Thursday. To-night, much less against it, I gave notice of meetings during the remainder of the week. Requests for prayers have been brought in, about a dozen in all, by the unconverted. And now, my Dear One, pray for me.

To D. B. N.

Victor, Jan., 1868.

. God is still very merciful to His church. Mr. — feels that he is forgiven. Mr. — hopes he is found of the Saviour. Mr. — arose in this evening's prayer-meeting and gave in his determination, and asked the intercession of Christians. These are all members of my Bible class. Mr. — gives touching evidence of a new birth. He also is the head of a family. Is it not wonderful and wonderfully delightful? It is a very pleasant thing to think I am in your evening worship. Will you not remember my Bible class? I think of only one unconcerned person in it.

To D. B. N.

Victor, Jan. 31, 1868.

.....About the revival—we are like them that dream; like the streams of the south is our captivity turned. Including Mr. P., we have now nine young married men who have come over to the side of the Lord and His church, six married ladies and ten or twelve unmarried ladies, two or three boys and as many girls, and we hope that the Lord still has gracious purposes toward us. There are yet two classes whose ranks are almost unbroken, persons past the age of forty and under that of twenty on the side of the males. The attendance increases. We have a young men's prayer-meeting conducted by themselves. Praise the Lord for His goodness; and yet I tremble at such mercy.....

To D. B. N.

Victor, May, 1868.

.....There is hardly anything so rich and suggestive as the Sacrament of the Holy Communion. And the miracles, too, are opening up to me quite as richly as did the parables, only I cannot manage to present their riches in so attractive a form. I have preached upon two, without gaining much interest for either one. It is too bad, for I think the people are losing precious truth in not getting hold of them. Perhaps I shall find some better plan for bringing them out sometime.....

To D. B. N.

Victor, June, 1869.

.....Your letter Saturday night did me a great deal of good. I had concluded, but it was more a result of feeling than of judgment, not to say anything on the Sabbath about my personal relations to the church; but you spoke out so warmly that I was touched as with a spark, and one of the memories I had when I arose next day in church was of your "three happy good years." And so you helped me more perhaps than you thought.....

Mr. Nichols lived in Victor "three happy" good years," and in September of 1869 went thence to the Olivet Presbyterian Church of Chicago. Very soon after taking up this charge, he had a serious illness, but the kindest of friends were again given to him. The hospitable home of Mr. Edward Ely was opened to him, and became his home during his stay in Chicago. This lasted only until the union of the Olivet Church and the Second Presbyterian Church could be arranged. The union was felt by all concerned to be wise, and both ministers resigned in order to effect it.

In March, 1871, Mr. Nichols accepted the call of Immanuel Presbyterian Church of Milwaukee, and immediately went there. This church had just been formed by the joining of an Old School and a New School church, and by characteristic tact and skill he moulded the united body into one harmonious whole. Shortly after his coming, the church received large accessions from two Congregational churches, so that the Immanuel congregation was one of extraordinary strength.

Those who remember the acknowledged leadership of Mr. Nichols in both the Milwaukee and Binghamton presbyteries will be interested in the following note.

To S. J. N.

Chicago, March, 1871.

I have pretty much decided to go to Milwaukee.....A point upon which I have many fears as to my ability is the leading position which the church holds and which the pastor

must take in all the ecclesiastical matters of the state. As you know, I have neither skill, experience nor taste for that branch of work. Sometimes it looks positively impossible to meet that demand. I think the church is apprehensive upon this point as well as myself.

In June of 1871 he brought his bride to Milwaukee, and for ten happy years that was his home. His five children were born during this time. They were years of incessant labor in the church, as is attested by the following resolutions, adopted by the congregation of Immanuel Church at the end of them.

“Whereas our beloved pastor, the Reverend G. P. Nichols, has tendered his absolute and unconditional resignation, for reasons deemed by him ‘imperative and providential,’ of the pastorate held by him for a period of more than ten years in this church and society, and

Whereas we are called upon to assent to the dissolution of the relations which have so long and so pleasantly existed between pastor and people,

Resolved, That we, the members of Immanuel Church and Society,.....deem it but an act of simple justice to our pastor, as well as a duty we owe ourselves, that in assenting to his request for a dissolution of his pastoral relations with this people, we should accompany such assent with a public recognition of the faithfulness, the devotion, and the marked success, which have characterized these years of service..... To show that this stewardship has been crowned with the tokens of divine favor, it is only necessary to refer to the facts that the membership of the church has increased from about 200 to 520; that the aggregate attendance upon the Sabbath services has been largely augmented; that the weekly prayer-meeting has been rendered one of the most agreeable and interesting of all the church gatherings; that two mission churches have been established, both of which are prosperous and accomplishing an important work in the community; and

that a magnificent church edifice has been erected, the entire cost of which has been liquidated during this period.

To sever relations which have continued, with such unmistakable marks of the Divine blessing, for a period of ten years, and have never been disturbed by one moment of discord, can but be regarded as an event of deep interest to all concerned, and of solemn far-reaching import.....In yielding to the request of our pastor in this regard, we cannot do less than testify our appreciation of the loss sustained in the surrender of a pastor endeared to us by years of pleasant intercourse, and by a multitude of tender and impressive memories of a scholarly and able sermonizer, who has few superiors in the pulpit and none in the social prayer-meeting, and whose felicitous addresses on many special occasions of public interest have reflected honor upon the church; of a courteous Christian gentleman more solicitous to serve others than himself, and of a public-spirited and worthy citizen. It is safe to say that there is not a member of this church or society, old or young, who cherishes other than the kindest sentiments and the most affectionate regard for our pastor and every member of his household; not one who will not follow them with the earnest desire and prayer that the choicest blessings of our common Master may rest upon them and abide with them wherever their lot may fall.”

While he was living in Milwaukee Mr. Nichols was for several years a trustee of Lake Forest University, and at the end of his service, in 1881, the university conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

He hoped for a year's rest after laying down his Milwaukee pastorate, his church having given him full salary for six months to come, and with this in view he took his family to Rochester in June of 1881. But he rested only until September of that year, when he received calls to Calvary Presbyterian Church of Buffalo and the First Presbyterian Church of Bing-

hamton. After much thought choice was made of the smaller church, which seemed to suggest less work and a quieter home for the family, and he removed to Binghamton in November, 1881. The hand of the Lord was evidently in this choice, and for the rest of his life, except for a few months, the church in Binghamton was his beloved home. The interruption of his residence there resulted from a call to the pastorate of the Central Presbyterian Church of Denver, given in the autumn of 1887. This he conditionally accepted, and he went to Denver in November of that year. But his wife was unable to endure the altitude of the place. In June of the next year he returned to the church in Binghamton, which had kept their home for the family and the pulpit for the minister, to finish his days there amid the universal and unfeigned esteem and affection of those he loved.

Dr. Nichols remained pastor of the First Church of Binghamton until January 1, 1906, when failing health compelled him to resign the charge. He was then named Pastor Emeritus of the church, with salary, and so continued until his death. During his pastorate in Binghamton he received several calls and offers of them from various places, including second calls from Immanuel Church of Milwaukee and Calvary of Buffalo. Some of these opportunities were very attractive financially, but Dr. Nichols loved the church in Binghamton and its people, and knew that they loved him, and refused to be tempted away.

The following extract from a historical account

of the First Church of Binghamton gives some idea of his work there: "The phenomenal growth and development of the church during the tenth and longest pastorate of its history is to be chiefly referred to the spirit of mutual love, unbroken amity, and hearty co-operation manifested by the people themselves. The love-knot of peace and like-mindedness one with another was the grand secret of all our increase in numbers, labor, and offerings.....The principal features of this quarter of a century of the church's history were its large Sunday congregations, its enriched service of worship, its inspiring prayer-meetings, its extended Sunday-school operations, its church-erection and church-extension enterprises in the outlying districts of the city, its removal of church-debt, its increased benevolent contributions, its rehabilitated house of worship, its missionary operations, its fruits of soul-winning labor, and the continuous increase of its membership." Eighteen hundred and seventy-nine persons were received into the church during this period. The offerings of the people for congregational expenses were \$213,651, and for benevolent purposes \$219,641.

Dr. Nichols was a loyal and enthusiastic Presbyterian. It was largely due to his efforts that three Presbyterian churches were established in new sections of Binghamton during his pastorate. For many years he administered the work of Synodical Home Missions in his presbytery with great efficiency, maintaining existing churches and planting new ones. Yet

perhaps the chief characteristic of both his thinking and his ministry was their true Christian catholicity. He made much of the things that are common to all Christians, and little of those that separate them. He knew and drew inspiration from the great men of all parts and ages of the Church. Did space permit giving it, a list of titles of sermons would show the wide range of his subjects. A series of evening sermons on the leaders of the medieval Church, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis of Assisi, and others, attracted special attention. A Roman Catholic priest once publicly advised his congregation to hear these, and at the time of Dr. Nichols' death favorable comment upon them appeared in the papers representing this communion. He earnestly desired the unity of the Church, and in regard to the placing of new churches strove for arrangements of comity between denominations, to prevent competition and duplication of effort. He recognized all Christians as his brothers in Christ, and this spirit of his won response from ministers and laymen of all names.

Two special features of his pastoral administration may be mentioned. He greatly loved beauty and dignity in public worship, and was one of the pioneers among Presbyterians in the use of enriched orders of service. In work for young people he was also early in the field, organizing in 1882 a young people's society according to plans of his own, which provided for almost all the activities that have since become universal in such societies.

Dr. Nichols had an illness in the summer of 1904, and only partially recovered from it, but he continued to be of much service to the congregation. An extract from a friend's letter is the best comment on this part of his life: ".....Did he not fight a good fight, those four long years of weariness and pain and heart-breaking recognition that his beautiful work was not to be continued? That seems to me the most pathetic part for him, to know he could do so much so well, and wait patiently while another stood in his place. He never was so fine to me as in the way he accepted this hard lot for such a man, and greeted us with that heavenly spirit and face. His beautiful bowed head in the last hymn that last Sunday morning I saw him (do look in the hymn-book, 761—

'My journey soon will end,
My staff and scrip laid down;
Oh! tempt me not with earthly toys,
I go to wear a crown.')

will always be remembered. I felt that he felt the words and I might never see him there again. It is such a satisfaction that those last services and words should have been so fitting for such a life. The editorials in the *Republican* and Judge Lyon's remarks on adjourning court were as you felt they should be, appreciative of what is highest in character, which they paused long enough in these scurry-ing days to recognize."

During the summer of 1908 Dr. Nichols seemed

stronger, and with his children and grandchildren around him enjoyed his summer home on Mount Prospect. His children are Reverend Robert Hastings Nichols, Ph.D., of Trinity Presbyterian Church, South Orange, N. J., Mrs. William H. Smith, of East Orange, N. J., Captain Henry J. Nichols, M.D., of the United States Army Medical Corps, Miss Content Shepard Nichols, instructor in Bryn Mawr College, and James K. Nichols, attorney-at-law, of Binghamton.

To D. B. N.

San Francisco, July, 1876.

“.....Well, life is a blessed thing to have with such a wife-love.....God is good to have made you and given you to me.”

To D. B. N.

Estes Park, Colo., July, 1898.

“How good God has been to us, an unbroken family, and how much joy has come to me through you, and through all and each.....”

In July and August of 1908 Dr. Nichols was able to do some pastoral work, and officiated at several funerals. He was apparently quite well until early in September, when a general break-down occurred, and after an illness of ten days he died at his home on September 17. The end was remarkably peaceful, and the family gathered at the bedside were unaware of the exact moment of dissolution. He died as he had always liked to say of the deaths of others, and as the Acts of the Apostles says of David, “having

served his generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep." Until an hour or two before his death he was able to recognize his children, all of whom except Captain Nichols were at the bedside. He missed this son, and spoke his name once or twice, and said "Are all five here?" shortly before he died. He faintly repeated the first words of the Twenty-third Psalm and the Lord's Prayer, and they were repeated by the family.

"Nothing is here for tears; nothing to wail,
To knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

The funeral service was held in the First Church on September 21. After prayers at the house the body of Dr. Nichols was taken to the church, and during three hours many came to see the loved face for the last time. A detail from the Sixth Battery, N. G. S. N. Y., of which Dr. Nichols was Chaplain, and officers of the church stood as guard of honor at this time. The beautiful church was made more beautiful by a profusion of flowers which filled every space around the pulpit and chancel, and no blackness marred the beauty of it all. The service itself, according to the family's wish, was most simple. The Reverend John J. Lawrence, Dr. Nichols' successor, read a Scripture lesson, and also the three hymns which he had repeated in his last hours, Faber's "My God, how wonderful Thou art," "There is a green hill far away," and Wesley's "O love divine, how

sweet thou art." One of the sweet singers of the choir sang "I know that my Redeemer liveth," from "The Messiah." Three hymns were sung by the congregation. Dr. Nichols' long-time friend, the Reverend John McVey, D.D., of Binghamton, offered prayer and gave the benediction. The burial was private, in Spring Forest Cemetery, in a place of his own choosing, the bearers being chosen from the three boards of officers of the church. In accordance with the request of the Chamber of Commerce, a very great token of respect was paid in the general closing of places of business in the city at the time of the funeral.

On the following Sunday afternoon, September 27, the church was again filled for a memorial service. Tender and appreciative resolutions were read from the Presbytery of Binghamton and the Session and Boards of Deacons and Trustees of the church. Mr. Albert B. Brown gave "A Personal Tribute to Dr. Nichols," Rev. Dr. McVey "The Testimony of A Long Friendship," Rev. Dr. Phillips "A Tribute of A Neighboring Pastor," and Rev. Mr. Lawrence "The Appreciation of a Colleague," all most loving and true in their memories and estimates. Memorial services were held also in Immanuel Church of Milwaukee and the Central Church of Denver, and resolutions there adopted were sent to Dr. Nichols' family.

Below are quoted several expressions of opinion concerning Dr. Nichols and his ministry, made at the time of his death.

From the Binghamton *Republican*, September 18, 1908:

The Passing of a Great Soul.

In the death of the Reverend Doctor Nichols the shadow of a great grief has fallen upon this city.

Not within the memory of this generation has death smitten so many hearts with a single blow.

Thousands who have sat under his ministration, whose childhood has been consecrated by his baptismal touch, whose earliest thought of Christian faith and duty has fallen from his life, whose conception of God's love and goodness has taken root and blossomed out under his luminous teaching, whose love has been crowned and blessed by him in the most sacred union and relations of life, whose grief-stricken hearts have been comforted by his sympathy, tender and deep as the love of woman,—all these must feel that the emblem of mourning is on their own doors and the shadow in their own homes.

Action of the Binghamton Chamber of Commerce, September 19, 1908:

“Inasmuch as the Rev. Dr. G. Parsons Nichols, who passed into his rest on Thursday, September 17, was for over a quarter of a century so closely allied and prominently identified with the civic and spiritual growth of Binghamton, the city which he deeply loved, and in view of the fact that his benign and powerful influence extended beyond the confines of his parish and spread broadcast throughout our city, the Binghamton Chamber of Commerce recommends and respectfully asks that the places of business in the city close on Monday, September 21, at four o'clock, for the day, as a mark of esteem and respect to the memory of one who was dearly beloved and revered by the community at large, and as an evidence of appreciation of the widespread good which he, in his lifetime among us, dispensed in a boundless manner, irrespective of creed, denomination, commercial or social standing.”

William H. Hecox, President,
Byres H. Gitchell, Secretary.

Words of Mr. Justice George F. Lyon, of the Supreme Court of New York, in adjourning court at the Court House in Binghamton at noon on the day of the funeral:

“A great sorrow has befallen our community. Rev. Dr. Nichols, who for a quarter of a century has ministered among us, has passed from the earthly life to the life immortal. Of broad and brilliant intellect, eloquent, forceful, courageous, courteous, tactful, sympathetic, of great personal charm and magnetism, yet he possessed all the tenderness, and trustfulness, and simplicity of a child. The broad influence for good of such a consecrated life cannot be well measured. A lover of truth and justice, his voice was ever given to upholding the courts in the just and impartial administration of the law. At the end, a noble Christian life was crowned by a beautiful Christian death.

“It is the desire of the Court, and of many of the attorneys and jurors in attendance, to be present at the funeral services which are to be held at the First Presbyterian Church at four o'clock this afternoon. In order to permit such attendance, and out of respect for the memory of the good man, the afternoon session of this Court will close at half-past three o'clock, and an adjournment will be taken until half-past nine o'clock to-morrow morning.”

From the Binghamton *Republican*, September 22, 1908:

Honoring Binghamton.

The tribute paid to the memory of Dr. Nichols yesterday by the people of this city, by the closing of business houses and courts and by the immense audience which gathered to offer their silent and often tearful testimony of love and veneration, is something that must give every one in this city a deep sense of civic pride. It shows how nobly this community will respond to the very highest and best in human character and example—how keenly appreciative it is of the most spiritual teaching and

the noblest ideals of life. It has therefore quite unconsciously honored itself in honoring one who was conspicuously the embodiment of those rare qualities which enrich the character along spiritual lines and lift it into a saintly atmosphere.

Here was a man who won no distinction in spectacular fields appealing to the imagination, no honor in public achievement; unheralded by the "trumpet that sounds of fame"; a simple teacher who taught, and lived as he taught, the fatherhood of God, the fellowship of Christ, the brotherhood of man, the exceeding beauty of truth and honor and righteousness. And as he taught from year to year his range of spiritual vision seemed to enlarge until it became almost prophetic; the spirit of Christ grew up within him, strong, resolute, yet full of the deepest love and sympathy—the noble courage of Paul and Peter blended with the sweetness and tenderness of the Beloved Disciple.

And yet this modest, child-like, Christ-like teacher Binghamton is honoring with speech and pen, with bowed heads, heart-ache and tears, as it has honored no other citizen within the memory of living men. It is well to live in a town that is thus mindful of the noblest in human character and the "Greatest Thing in the World."

Extracts from an appreciation of Dr. Nichols' preaching, written by one long a member of his church, printed in the *Binghamton Press*, September 21, 1908:

The active ministry of G. Parsons Nichols marks an epoch in the spiritual and intellectual life of this community. Coming here in the fullness of his powers he gave to his church and city the choicest results of an ample endowment and adequate preparation. He had scholarship, not specialization. His reading in the English classics had been wide and sympathetic. He had mastered the art of public speaking and the display of its range and power, on occasion, became a matter of civic pride. No great public function was complete unless "Doctor Nichols" were present.

* * * * *

When at his best Dr. Nichols was entitled to be called a great preacher. There was that fusion of intellect and emotion, logic and imagination, facts and vision possessed by only the great preachers. At such times he seemed to "see face to face" and spoke with fervor, with dramatic force, with flaming intensity of conviction, with winning persuasiveness. His "river of speech" carried everything before it.

Year in and year out he made his pulpit a commanding height. Year in and year out, while time was placing upon his head the crown of glory, he stood in his pulpit. It was well-balanced and proportioned, edifying, satisfying preaching. It had the finish of the written discourse and the fervor of the extempore. It appealed to both heart and intellect. It had range and sympathy. The preacher drew from books, nature, the everyday, and put upon it all the glow of imagination and the interpretation of the spirit.

He did not preach a denominational gospel. His creed was as broad as "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." So men of every creed, and men of no creed found in his preaching health and help.

Because he never slighted a small occasion, Dr. Nichols was the master of the "great" occasion. He not only seized, but expanded his opportunity. With perfect taste and flawless tact he had the artistic temperament. He knew the value of a shading, an inflection, a gesture, a pause. He was master of the noblest of the arts—the art of public speaking, and he put it to a noble use.".....

Extracts from an estimate of Dr. Nichols' preaching, written by a former associate in the ministry of the First Church:

".....His sermons were always logical in the sequence of thought, and convincing in argument—satisfying the reason-faculty of the keenest mind among his auditors; yet the style was not argumentative. The appeal was to the whole nature of the hearer, not to his reason alone. For example, the writer remembers an Easter Day sermon which seemed absolutely ir-

refutable in its argument for the resurrection of Christ; but the final impression which one carried away was not the proving of the resurrection, but the glory which that event casts over all human life, and the thrilling appeal which the fact of immortality makes to a man's best nature.....

But the crowning quality of his preaching was the glowing eloquence of the preacher. It was the eloquence of a great mind and a great heart set on fire by great ethical and spiritual convictions, and giving expression to these convictions with rare oratorical art. Possessed of a noble presence, a musical voice, and extraordinary natural dramatic power, Dr. Nichols consecrated these talents to his high vocation, and used them with an effectiveness which is seldom seen in the modern pulpit."

Sermons

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF GOD'S THOUGHTS.

“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!”
Psalm 139: 17.

We have for our morning meditation, my friends, the 17th verse of the 139th Psalm. “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!” These are great words surely. Great and mysteriously beautiful would they be even though they contained no further depths of meaning than they seem to have upon the surface. They seem to be the words of a man to whom it has become known not only that God is—but also that God is thinking upon him. The Psalmist has gotten hold of the fact, and is deeply impressed by it, that his life, finite and insignificant as it is, is somehow involved in the thinkings and plannings of the Infinite and Eternal. He catches sight of God's thoughts reaching down like invisible hands lifting him up and away into their eternal order and placing him among the mysteries of the infinite mind.

But I hinted at a latency, at concealments of meaning somewhere in the passage. They are in the word “thoughts.” “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God.” There are two kinds of thoughts one may have for a person, head thoughts and heart thoughts, thoughts that are perceptions, observations, judgments, and thoughts that are cares, affections,

Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, 1883,
1891, 1902.

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sympathies. You are sitting in a railway carriage when a stranger enters and takes the seat opposite. You observe the expression of his face, you notice his general appearance and perhaps fall to speculating about his character, business and residence. Until something else diverts your attention, he continues, it may be, the subject of your thoughts.

But now suppose that beside you in the carriage is also one with whom your heart is closely bound up, a dearly loved wife for instance. Ever conscious of her presence, anticipating her every want, reading her mind in inquiring and answering looks of love, how unlike your thoughts for her and your thoughts for the stranger! Your thoughts for the stranger are mere glances of the understanding which fall upon their object at a distance without ever admitting him into the real secret of your presence and interest, and soon dismiss him altogether. But your thoughts for the loved one by your side are outgoings of your deepest nature which, drawn to their object by the affinities of love, bring her into the mind's inmost abode and keep her there.

Now these two kinds of thoughts, thoughts of the head and thoughts of the heart, which we find in ourselves, the Bible teaches us to find in God. God has a twofold sphere in thinking, a sphere within a sphere. First there is the sphere of His omniscience. God is a clear sleepless eye, never clouded, never dazzled, never escaped. His look is upon absolutely every point in creation. From the invisible clod beneath

our feet up to the seraph that burns nearest the throne, all is under His unbroken glance. And God reads down into the core. Like the watchmaker's look into the open watch is His glance into the secrets of the solid globe, into the secrets of the sea below and space above, into the secrets of the soul and life of man. God's eye, God's mind takes in everything in the wide universe and much that was never in it and perhaps never will be in it. God knows what might be as well as what is, the possible as well as the actual.

This is the outer sphere of God's thoughts, the thoughts which His universal knowledge gives Him. It is a prodigious range. Our arts, sciences, literatures, philosophies, are mere explorations into the fringe and border of it—so many spoonfuls dipped up from the sea of His thoughts. Our astronomies, geologies, chemistries, biologies are feeble guesses at a few of His ideas about creation. So are our sciences of measurement and engineering, of His plans of construction. Our intellectual philosophies and psychologies are shadows dim and grotesque like silhouette faces of His thoughts about the human mind. In no department of knowledge have we more than a few letters of its alphabet by which we spell out some small words, misspell many more, while the great work of its description lies like a sealed book all unread and unimagined before us.

There is something wonderful in the thought which James Martineau has expressed, that the hidden things which we slowly discover, the new and marvell-

ous inventions which year by year are gradually brought to the light, like the locomotive, the telegraph and the telephone, have all been present to the mind of God from the beginning, "that the secrets for which ages pine and sigh lie clear within His vision close at hand, that in every observatory where the patience of many a generation has grown gray there is an Eye that sweeps beyonds the field of the strongest telescope, in every chamber of study a Reason where no darkness is, in every library a living mind of whose forethought all that pomp and love of science is but the imperfect afterthought."

But without delaying longer here, far within this outer circle of God's mind is another deeper region of thinkings, of which the most partial view has for every one of us a value and comfort greater than the entire comprehension, if that were possible, of all other knowledge whatsoever. It is the region of God's will and heart. Love thinks as well as intellect. Love distinguishes, recognizes, remembers, foresees. Love has its intuitions, its solitudes, its planings, its provisions. God's love makes a complete sphere of thoughts of its own, thoughts which stand out, or rather stand in from the great mass of His universal knowledge. God communes with Himself about the little child, about the earnest seeker after light, about the penitent confessor, about the faithful toiler, about the suffering dying martyr, as He communes about no other earthly objects.

"His eye seeth every precious thing. His percep-

tion singles out the jewels of the universe and like the telescope passes rapidly over darkness and blank spaces and pitches searchingly on stars." He does not have to look out and see His especial objects on the earth where they visibly are. He looks within and finds them in His own bosom where they really are. And His thoughts for them do not rise so much from what He sees in them as from what He feels in Himself for them. The thoughts of knowledge are acquired, the thoughts of love are self generated. So it is not said that God *saw* Noah shut up in the Ark, but God *remembered* Noah, as if the thought came from within instead of without. So God saw Moses in the ark of rushes, Joseph in the prison, Jeremiah in the dungeon and Daniel in the den of lions, by looking into the secret of His own Presence. And so the heaven-taught prayer of the penitent thief was not, "Lord, behold me," but, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." "Go not out into the wide field of Thine omniscience on that great day, but go down into the secret of Thine own loving memories of me."

It was the contents of the inner sphere of the Divine Mind which the Psalmist had before him when he wrote, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God." This is evident from the peculiar word he uses. Had there been such a word the translation would have hit his meaning exactly by saying, "How precious are thy carings for me, O God." Explain it he could not, deserve it he knew he did not, but he be-

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lieved the divine assurance that he was hidden in the secret place of the Most High. O how good and beautiful it seemed to him to be there! How strong and secure and happy it made him! It took all fear and anxiety away and made him like one who walks with a greater and mightier than himself. He felt it was greatness enough and blessedness enough just to be in God's mind and to have God's thoughts encircling, enwrapping and supporting him.

"How precious are thoughts unto me, O God!" God's thoughts are precious in the first place because they are His thoughts and not a man's. Not that I think it would be no blessing to be in a human mind in the deep sense of the Psalmist. For my part I should hold it one of the highest privileges of my life to have a really great and good man, one whom I deeply revered and trusted, an Isaiah, a St. John, a Fenelon, a Madam Guyon, it seems to me that it would be one of the richest blessings of existence to have such a person draw near to me each day and surround me with his thoughts and draw me into the secret of his presence and communion. But now what if instead of the great prophet or the beloved disciple, it be the Lord God Himself who comes to me in all the incommunicable beauty and unstinted blessedness of His attributes of glory, and puts His thoughts upon me as the atmosphere in which I live and move? Will it not be as if a great thick door were shut around me, and all the perils of life and tumults of existence and adverse circumstances were outside?

I was reading the other day of a missionary in Eastern Africa, not a great man, but a man completely hidden in the Divine Presence, who visited a village where a ranging lion was the unresisted terror of all the people. It could not be the will of God, so the missionary reasoned, that this beast should lord it over His children. So he went out and pitched his tent in the thick jungle, and when night came he went out and lay down to sleep as unconcerned as if he were in his own house. In the middle of the night he was awakened by the sound of the lion's paw rending the earth at the open door and his terrific roar shaking the tent. He arose, took his gun and shot the beast, and lay down again as quietly as though he were doing some Christian work out there.

With this same confidence he who is hidden in God's thoughts walks among spiritual lions. God's thoughts reach down into the inner man. They act on the soul, the mind, the heart, and have power to quell the strongest passions that rage in the human breast. Man thinks and thinks again, and nothing comes of it. But God's thoughts are infinite dynamos. God once thought upon that which was not, and this glorious world with all its countless forms of life and beauty burst out of nothingness into being. God once thought upon the lives and sorrows of a fallen race, and the Son of the Highest became man, died on the Cross and took away the sins of the world. God thinks upon us and all His living creatures every moment, and we are preserved in being and sustained in

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the use of all our complex faculties and powers. One day God will think upon the dead, and all who are in their graves will feel the omnipotence of His thought and come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation. All our strength, dear friends, strength of body and strength of mind, strength to think and strength to speak, strength to resist and strength to suffer, strength of enthusiasm and strength of patience, strength in public and strength in solitude, all our forms of strength and beauty and happiness are simply God's thoughts upon us.

It seems to me another element of preciousness in God's thoughts for us is that they are for each one of us separately and personally. They are His thoughts for you and you and me. It is not so with our minds. We lose hold of the individual in trying to take in large numbers. We have to generalize and to plan and think and pray for them in classes, as the young, the aged, the poor, the sick, the unsaved, the penitent. But God thinks about His millions of children as we think about our families, making each one of us the object of a separate knowledge and a separate feeling. In God's mind each one of us has a place of his own, each of us is thought of by himself, each of us is called by name. God remembers Noah, calls Abraham, speaks to Moses, communes with David. "Go tell my disciples and Peter," said the newly risen Jesus. Spoke the Lord in a vision to

Ananias, "Arise and go into the street called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus for behold he prayeth." He singles out Binghamton streets and names as well as these in His thinkings and dispatchings. So there is an exclusiveness in God's love. You have one hiding-place in His presence and I have another. There are secret transactions between Him and each one of you that I shall never know. There is a door in His Presence no one can enter but thyself. There is a veil in His thought which thou only canst penetrate. And for this thou wert created, to bring forth the hidden riches of grace in thy secret place to the glory of God and man's blessing.

I feel this ought to mean a great deal in strengthening our personality, and enabling us to stand erect and disregard people's criticisms. My friends, some of us are pretty weak. We can hardly bear anything said against our faith, our religion, our Saviour, without shrinking under it. We are sensitive as snails out of their shells. Let anyone sneer at the Church, laugh at the Bible, toss off some skeptical smartness about our piety and we are stung and ready to run away outwardly and inwardly. What we want is strength of personality. We want the feeling of God's thoughts about us, lifting us up in confidence and courage. Let the blessed truth that God knows you separately, loves you separately, calls you to live a life of separate fellowship with Him and separate responsibility in the world, let this fact take

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full possession of your mind and heart, and your oversensitiveness will pass away and you will care no more about people's criticisms than about the winds that blow.

Passing now from God's thoughts as they exist in His mind, I should like to look at some of the forms of expression which they take in coming to us. All around us are these expressions. The new-born light streaming up from the reddening East, the golden haze of autumn noonday, the fair valleys sleeping in the deepening shadows of the afternoon, the fiery splendors of the setting sun and the starry midnight skies are God's thoughts of beauty and glory. The immovable hills, lofty mountains, rocky promontories and round ocean are His thoughts of grandeur and impregnable strength. The sun, the falling rain, and waving harvests are His thoughts of goodness and rich beneficence. The tender leaf, the scented blossom, the painted butterfly, the crystalline snowflake and exquisite frost flowers are His thoughts of minute attention and delicate skill.

Then our occupations, our homes, our social relationships, our studies and books, with all that gladdens and inspires our lives, what are they but expressions of God's thoughts for us? Boatmen gliding down the stream in the deepening twilight and leaning over the sides of their boat may seem to see underneath them an expanse of tenderest blue studded with sparkling gems, and river banks overhung with trees clothed like those St. John saw, with leaves and fruits

of more than earthly quality ; seem to see this beneath them, but the realities of all these reflected glories are above them. And so, my friends, above us are the truth and purity, the trust and love and devotion which we seem to see in the hearts which bear us up by their strength and sympathy. These human supports and comforts, these dear faces which greet us after absence and lend a sunlight to our dreams, are nothing more or less than reflections of God's thoughts for us.

We begin with God's thoughts in nature, where many an one, like Mungo Park bending over the forget-me-not in the African desert, has strangely felt the invisible Presence about him. But I have something more to tell you. In this blessed Book open to every one of us God has poured His thoughts and carings for you and me into human speech. Greater wonder still, He has poured His thinking and caring mind into human flesh. God has uttered Himself. Jesus Christ is the Word, the expression of the Godhead. The Cross is the pierced Heart of Heaven. All the fulness of God's thoughts and feelings for us are in the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is ours to draw near to and to confide in, ours to acknowledge as our own and to be confessed as His own, ours to cast our sins upon Him and to put on His righteousness, ours to belong to Him and to follow after Him, ours to become like Him and to be with Him where He is. And so by thinking on us God has not only lifted us up into His bosom but He has Him-

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self come down into our bosom, He in us and we in Him, so to exist ever more.

Think of it, brethren, realize it. Having received Christ into your hearts, you are in the bosom of the Father. You are among the deep things of God. Omniscience, almightiness, immensity, eternity, stand around you like the mountains around about Jerusalem. Truth and love and righteousness cover you. Under the shelter of these greatnesses you are in His mind like vessels riding at anchor in a cliff-enclosed harbor. What matters that you have come in wrecks split upon fatal rocks and with sails torn by fierce winds? Here is caring for the most wounded and wasted life, to grow into strength and beauty again. Will you not be glad and gratefully sing with a Hindoo Christian poetess,

“In the secret of His Presence, how my soul delights to hide!
Ah, how hallowed are the lessons that I learn at Jesus’
side!”?

Here I draw to a close. Can we not, my friends, rise up from our sittings and go forth from the sanctuary this morning with new peace on our faces and new freedom in our hearts from the world’s prizes and eagerly coveted plaudits? Does it not seem strangely unworthy of those upon whom are fastened the look and thought of Him who is above all, to be seeking their good in the look and thought of others no better than themselves, powerless either to bless or curse? To be eager for places of distinction, to covet this or that mode of life, to pine for admission

into circles of fashion, to have the heart set upon splendid settlements and splendid establishments, to be self-conscious and self-complacent, proud and delicate and querulous, having the eyes toward the world as the eyes of a maid are toward her mistress, brethren, are these things for God's children? And in the end when flesh and heart fail, will it be anything to the soul that she has all these, but has His loving thought upon her no more? "I have lived for the world and I have lost it," were the twice repeated words of a dying man. It must be the awful thought at the end of everyone who lives for the world. Only one thing can a man keep forever—God, God and his own soul. No, I am in error—he can if he will keep sin and the absence of God forever.

But again there is something here for those who are still strangers to the reconciled love of God. I look over this congregation and see one and another whom I love and who I feel are in the darkness; in doubt, in dispeace, homeless and viewless they are. They are trying to cheer themselves with such objects as are about them, but still their heart is lonely, still their feet are slipping, still death is drawing nigh. Dear souls, I long to see you shut up in the secret of his Presence. I long to have his loving thoughts around you now and in eternity. I long to have you hidden with Christ and His holy Church in God. So you shall be if you will now take up the gift which God has laid at your feet, the gift of His own dear Son whom He has given to you to be your

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pardon, your purity, your peace, your pledge of Heaven and assurance of everlasting life. Take Him—He has waited long for you—take Him and let Him who died for you be your hiding place, and lift you up from the gates of hell into the light of your Father's smile and the security of your Father's thoughts.

Once more, there is something here also for those who have to carry incommunicable burdens, who have bodily sufferings for which sympathy may not be asked, or who have perplexities of mind which they cannot express to themselves, much less to others, or who are filled with forebodings unbreathed because their objects are sacred and cannot be exposed, or who are solitary because their objects are taken away and no one is left to understand, or who cherish lonely heights of aspiration with none to bear them company, or who enter upon paths of duty misunderstood and misinterpreted by dearest friends. Ye who sit solitary in the sanctuary, is it nothing that God cares for you? Is it nothing that your loneliness gives you a deeper place in His mind and that through it His thoughts are more often upon you? Go and unburden your heart to Him. You cannot tell your troubles to man who does not know them, but you can tell them to Him who knows them already and weighed them before they came. Surely this is a verse for you to keep much about your heart until the day break and the lost are given back. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!"

THE MORNING STAR.

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end,.....I will give him the morning star.” Revelation 2: 26, 28.

Rising at an early hour one morning some time ago and looking out at the window I saw a beautiful sight. The sky was without a trace of cloud, a body of perfect clearness delicately tinged with orange and rose color. The dawn was steadily brightening into day and all things seemed new, primal, promiscuous. The stars had already paled in the light of the near approach of the effulgent king. Only the moon, now in its diminishing quarter, glistened like a golden crescent high upon the breast of the morning sky, while a space above, flaming in the regal forehead of the dawn, shone the morning star. The glory of that solitary high-hanging lamp of heaven fixed my eyes and streamed down into my heart. I remembered the supernatural fascination which the heavenly bodies once exerted over men and made them their worshippers. I remembered the Saviour's word, “I am the bright and morning star,” and His mystic promise, “he that overcometh.....I will give him the morning star.”

You all know the significance of the Morning Star. It is the forerunner. It is the beautiful harbinger of

approaching day. It is the King's herald, bright with the splendor and prediction of the presence of the King himself. Just as the rainbow declares the sovereignty of the sunshine over the clouds, just as the first ripe fruits of autumn are an earnest of the golden harvest to come, so the Morning Star is the pledge of the victory of light over darkness and the bright precursor of the Brightness itself. Milton describes it as

“Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong'st not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn
With thy bright circlet.”

I think we have all seen persons who gave us the impression of having received the Morning Star. I have in mind now a man whose forehead glows as it were with a strange light. He is never cast down or discouraged. He is not anxious nor disquieted as other men. He carries about him an assurance of success, an anticipation of victory. No darkness or confusion of the hour disheartens or disturbs him. His very face like a high mountain peak seems to catch the reflection of a far-off dawn.

My friends, have you not sometime met a man or woman who seemed to possess a luminousness of spirit which others had not, which you could not precisely define or describe, but which had the effect of clothing them with wonderful assurance and making them strangely serene, self-poised, confident of the future? Have you not known persons who acted as

if they had within them a hidden fountain of light which shed its beams around them continually? In this account given of a great man over his grave I think you will all recognize a possessor of the Morning Star. "Above the changing fortunes of the cause of which he was the leader, he moved as undisturbed as the stars in their orbits. He was never elated by success, never disheartened by temporary disaster and failure. Of ultimate success he was always certain."

Biographers of Abraham Lincoln tell us of a mystery in the man which no one could explain—a kind of higher vision which in the darkest hours of the civil war made him act as if he saw a light others could not see, and had bread to eat which others knew not of. Was it not the possession of the Morning Star which enabled the great President to hold up his head in the dark day? "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. . . . and I will give him the morning star." The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of heaven, who is always giving something of Himself to those who love and obey Him, and who names Himself the Bright and Morning Star, here promises to bestow some of His light-possessing power and radiancy upon His faithful and persevering followers. "Follow on," He says to those who are resisting sin and striving earnestly to conform themselves in everything to His will and example, "follow on and faint not, and I will give you some of My light in which you shall see light and possess light and be yourselves

radiant forerunners of the everlasting dawn. I will give you the Morning Star.”

My friends, I do not bring this wonderful promise to you this morning because I seem to comprehend all its meaning and think I can lead you to the end of it. I seem to myself like one standing at the entrance of a glorious pathway, who sees but a few steps into it, but who wishes to advance far as he sees that he may see more and advance farther. The gift of the Morning Star seems to me first of all a gift of knowledge. Not that knowledge which consists in the mere accumulation of facts or the study of phenomena. How much knowledge there is that does not enlighten its possessor or any one else! How many students, accurate laborious painstaking students, spend their strength upon the surfaces of things without ever penetrating their inner essential radiancy, and are really more like meadow moles than like morning stars!

To know a thing you must not only see the thing itself, but you must see it in the light of the larger truth that surrounds it and interprets it. You are standing before a great painting. You admire the gracefulness of the figures, the naturalness of their attitudes, the depth and richness of the coloring, and go away without knowing anything of the author, the history or the purpose of the picture. Some time after you meet the artist and become intimately acquainted with him. One day he lets you into the knowledge of his thought and purpose in painting that picture.

What a revelation! What a different thing that picture seems now! You see it as you never saw it before. You see it in the light of its creator and its creator's purpose. You observe a woman going from one great man's house to another's interceding for someone or something you know not what. A most uninteresting sight! How dull and dreary seems her lot! But you are told that that woman is the wife of a man who after being tried and condemned and degraded and imprisoned for a crime he never committed has been tried and condemned a second time, and that the devoted woman is expending every energy she possesses to secure his pardon. And now looking at her in the light of her intense inextinguishable love for her martyr husband, how beautiful the woman appears! Her face glows like a star. Every detail of her effort and experience flashes a radiance from it.

My friends, there is a light which surrounds all things, puts them in their own true light and interprets them. It is the light of the knowledge of God. "In thy light," says the Psalmist, "we see light." True, profoundly true. He who stands in the light of God sees all things, the events of the world around, the events of his own inner experience also, in their own deeper light. If you will think how Jesus saw things here on earth you will understand exactly what I mean. He saw all things in the light of His Father, saw the heavens in the light of His Father's creating thought, saw the lilies of the field in the light of His

Father's loving care for the least of His creatures, saw the world of sinning men in the light of His Father's pity and desire, saw His own life, death too, in the light of His Father's will and wish. All this dark world Jesus saw as a Son in His Father's House. He was thus the Bright and Morning Star to the other sons and thus He gives the Morning Star to those who love and obey Him.

Secondly, the Morning Star is a gift of power and leadership. As a man sees so is he. His vision is the measure of his power. He who sees only what is near by must always be weak, timid, anxious. He whose vision reaches on and takes in what is far off is strong and moves freely and powerfully. What a difference between a man who is always looking around him and studying the immediate consequences of his words and actions in the faces of his fellow men, and a man who is always looking up and acting in the light of the face of eternal truth and righteousness! One creeps on the ground and grovels in the fear of man, which is always before his eyes; the other stands up confidently, moves forward with the whole force of his nature and sees already the light of ultimate victory in his course. This is the very secret of the world's great leaders, in the Bible and out of it. Moses, David, Paul, Luther, Knox, Cromwell, Washington, Garibaldi, General Gordon, you have only to glance at these commanding spirits to recognize the prevision of victory on their foreheads. They antici-

pated the triumph of their cause. They were conquerors while they fought.

“They viewed the triumph from afar,
They seized it with their eye.”

They had the Morning Star.

It was this which also drew men to them and gave them their sovereignty over others. Men believed them and followed them whithersoever they led because they felt that their eyes were on high and that they knew whither they were going. We need such leaders now. We need in the state men who look at questions of public concern in the light not of current opinion and the passing day, but of eternal issues. We need in the Church men whose minds are lifted up into the sweep of God's omnipotent purposes, men with spiritual vision so clarified and intensified that like St. Stephen they pierce through the confusions of the hour far into the heavens and see Jesus crowned with glory and power. O, how strong, how unconquerable it makes even the youngest and humblest soul to receive the Morning Star! The spirit of the heavenly vision gives birth to power, to confidence, to calmness.

Thirdly the Morning Star is a gift of inspiration in the work of life. We have read of men who have wrought their common daily tasks in the light of God's face and for the glory of God's name. We have read of stone masons whose chisels sang and whose hammers rang the praises of God as truly as

the choirs of heaven. We have read of house servants who have swept rooms, scoured pots and kettles and done all drudgery, as it is called, with holy fervor as a service to God and their Saviour. My friends, can life's work in this end of the nineteenth century be done divinely still? Is it possible for laboring men to be kings and priests unto God and for us all to do this work of life not chiefly to men but to Him who sits there on the throne? Certainly it is possible. It needs only the gift of the Morning Star, the vision of the larger light of God upon it, to make all honest labor divine and lift the whole work of life into a sacred liturgy.

But this is not what I set out to say. I was about to speak of the way in which the possessor of the Morning Star is inspired to Christian work. He sees not only God, but man in the light of God. He walks the crowded streets, and the men and women he meets appear to him not as they actually are, subject of ambitions and appetites, but as they are ideally in the redeeming thought and desire of God. He recognizes the possible angel in every face he sees, the hidden image of God in every breast. As his mind expands to the conception of the value of men's souls so his heart kindles with desire for them. He looks upon his congregation, upon his Sunday-school class, upon his sons and daughters, upon his friends and neighbors, not as so many persons whom he knows all about, but as immortal spirits whose life passes human comprehension, who are known only to Him

who created them and died for them. Do you wonder that a great enthusiasm for souls springs up within him and becomes the over-mastering motive and desire of his life?

Again, the Morning Star is a gift of consolation. My friends, life is full of trial, full of darkness. Mornings bright with promise are turned into noon-days and afternoons of clouds and storm. In the lives of all of us come moments when only one Voice can speak to us, and not even that is always heard at first. Moments in the experience of long-continued pain and physical agony, moments of depression in the ceaseless struggle with indwelling sin, moments of discouragement over the lost accumulations of years, moments of unavailing regret over real or imagined mistakes, moments in the waking hours of the lonely night, in the deepening shadows of the dark valley on the sick-bed, in the breaking heart-strings of love's last embrace of love, in the sad return from the freshly covered grave to the empty home. " 'I will give him the morning star.' He shall look down and roam in the dark narrow circle of his own thoughts and feelings no more. He shall lift his eyes on high and see his sorrow in the larger light of My great and gracious purpose in it. He shall see that his way was not hidden for one moment from My eyes or passed over by My care. He shall feel what was dark to him is all light to Me and what is bitter now will be sweet by and by. He shall know Me as only those who have suffered can know Me, in My chastening, purifying

love, and he shall find out of his own blessed experience that all things do indeed work together for the good, the eternal good of them that love God.”

Once more, the Morning Star is the gift of the hope of a blessed immortality. If Christ has given us the star that leads up to the morning He will not withhold the daybreak itself. Having given the pledge He will bring in the fulfillment. He who cannot deceive and cannot do anything imperfectly will never leave those to whom He has given the Morning Star in darkness or suffer His holy ones to see corruption. This is the old argument for immortality in a new form. The old argument was, immortality exists as an idea, an instinct in every man’s mind; therefore immortality must be a fact. The shadow proves the substance. The thirst proves the fountain. “We wish for immortality,” says Frederic Robertson, “the thought of annihilation is horrible. The wish is a kind of argument. It is not likely that God would have given all men such a feeling if He had not meant to gratify it.”

Addison puts the same argument upon the lips of Roman Cato—

“Plato, thou reasonest well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
’Tis the divinity that stirs within us.
’Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter
And intimates eternity to man.”

So the argument has stood. This is the fact now added to it. Men and women who receive Jesus Christ into their hearts realize at the same time an assurance of immortality, and that a joyous blessed immortality of communion with Him, which they never felt before. Brethren, to me this is the deepest, strongest, most satisfying proof of a blessed life to come, the fact that in direct proportion as we receive the Lord Jesus into our thoughts and lives and become invested with Him in will and purpose, in that same proportion there springs up within our souls the belief and confidence that we shall rise with Christ and be undying partakers of His heavenly life and joy. I know that you are so taken up with your cares and toils that you do not often dwell upon the prospect of a heaven with communion with God. And yet I am sure there are moments when the thought passes through the hearts of some of you like a song in the night,—the thought of seeing all things clear, the thought of being wholly and forever free from the consciousness of sin, the thought of walking about pure, radiant, kingly as Christ Himself, the thought of having powers set free and employments given you greater than you have ever engaged in here, the thought of tasting joys with one another, with the angels, with those you have loved and lost a while, with the Master Himself, beyond all thought we can now conceive.

One word more and I pause. The Morning Star is not given to everybody. It is given to a certain dis-

tinct type of character. “ ‘He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end. . . . I will give him the morning star.’ He whose life is a struggle towards what is spiritual and divine, a struggle often baffled but never given up, never ended, a struggle continued earnestly, maintained unflinchingly, unfalteringly, to life’s end—to him I will give the Morning Star.”

Brethren, we must hold fast. It is not enough to begin well. Continuance is the test of character. Fidelity is the sum of all duties. Steadfastness is the greatest of all virtues. Let me read you what one has written whose battle is now over, who sings the victor’s song: “When we have to go on day by day contending with a passionate or sluggish nature, limiting the one, enkindling the other, meeting small temptations every hour so that watchfulness must never be relaxed, when no sooner is one wrong deed laid in the grave than another rises up so that the sword of life is never in the scabbard, when we know this will go on for years, till death comes—then not to give way to angry weariness, not to brood over the battle, but to take it frankly as it comes as part of the day’s work, to make of higher endeavor an inward light which makes the path before us always bright, to conquer the chill of custom and the weight of commonplace and be inspired always by an inward thought; to pour into life such love of God and man that all things will grow beautiful and worthy to be

done, and look forward persevering to the last, 'from well to better daily self-surpast,' this is to be faithful unto death, and for these things there is the crown of life.'"

UNUSED SPICES.

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.” St. Luke 24: 1.

I once saw in the corner of a newspaper a poet's interpretation of this verse which opened it to my mind as no commentary had ever done. I would like to read it as being at once a revealing insight into the text and a fitting introduction to what I have to say upon it.

“What said the women as they bore
Their fragrant gifts away,
The spices which they did not need,
That Resurrection Day?

Did Mary say within her heart,
‘Our work hath been in vain;’
Or counting o’er the spices brought,
Of so much waste complain?

Not so, for though the risen Lord
Their offering did not need,
Not unrewarded was the love
That planned the reverent deed.

Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, 1893, 1897; and also in these churches: Brick Presbyterian, Rochester; Binghamton State Hospital for the Insane, 1893; Presbyterian, Dunmore, Pa., 1893; Central Presbyterian, Rochester, 1893; First Presbyterian, Buffalo, 1893; New York Avenue Presbyterian, Washington, D. C., 1893; First Presbyterian, Cortland, N. Y., 1897; Second Presbyterian, Scranton, 1897; Immanuel Presbyterian, Milwaukee, 1897; Central Presbyterian, Denver, 1898; Presbyterian Mission, Beirut, Syria, 1899; Presbyterian, Gilbertsville, N. Y., 1900; First Presbyterian, Englewood, N. J., 1902; First Presbyterian, Wilkes-Barre, 1902; North Presbyterian, Binghamton, 1903; West Presbyterian, Binghamton, 1904.

For though unused their fragrant store,
Yet well might they rejoice,
Since they the first who saw the Lord,
The first who heard His voice.

Sweet story, hast thou not some truth
For my impatient heart,
Some lesson that shall stay with me
Its comfort to impart?"

I think it has a lesson, and a very instructive lesson, to teach us all. It seems to me this little incident contains a deep illuminating truth, a truth which throws light upon some of life's dark places, and which must shine into many hearts in this congregation with consoling power.

My subject is the Unused Spices of life. By unused spices I mean the unutilized gifts and graces, the unapplied faculties and powers, the unrealized ideals and aspirations of human souls. I mean those offerings of love and service and devotion which seem to be declined, those rich and fragrant stores of knowledge and learning, of endowment and acquisition, of labor and consecration, which have been gathered and prepared with the thought of honoring the Lord's body, and when the time should come to use them the opportunity is not given. I have in mind now one whose childhood was exceedingly interesting and attractive and whose youth was an unfolding of corresponding promise. Wordsworth's line, "Heaven lies about in our infancy," had living illustration in the beautiful opening of her life. She seemed to be

modelled of finer clay. An exquisitely tempered spirit was she, adjusted to all the graces, attuned to all the harmonies of nature and art, of truth and beauty. Expression, eloquent expression, came to her in various forms like a gift from heaven. She might have written striking books. She might have become famous with pencil and brush. She might have been a literary and social queen. But hers was a life of unused spices, unrealized visions, undeveloped capabilities. Her days were spent in bearing the heavy stiff wooden yoke of practical necessity. Her life was a hard, painful, unrelieved struggle for herself and for her children with the problem "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

I do not mention this as anything remarkable. Similar instances are rising in your minds while I speak. You are thinking now of some person whose lot in life seems utterly at variance with his gifts for life, and the results of such variance, stifled purposes, quenched ardors, unused talents, seem a precious store of "spices sweet and ointments rare" brought to life's work in vain. He whose heart beat in warmest sympathy with his fellow men and who would have entered into the widest interests and fellowships of humanity is living perhaps in a solitary dug-out on the plains. He is toiling with shovel and pick who under other circumstances would have been a discoverer of truth and a revealer of beauty. In our shops and factories are men with grimy hands and black-

ened faces who with different environments might have been merchant princes or poet preachers. I frequently see before me in this sanctuary faces, wistful pathetic faces, in whose revealing looks I cannot but read the story of repressed aspirations and imprisoned powers. Life is full of arrested development. Yonder lives a young man, intelligent, keen-eyed, finely educated, with his faculties all trained and ready for life's use, but he is disarmed and incapacitated for work and advancement by a crippled body. Wasting away in chambers of life-long sickness and looking into these lovely summer days with eyes full of the pathos of what might have been are spirits who once burned with fires of enthusiasm and dreamed of great achievements.

You know how the ferns unfold in the spring. They first appear with their heads curled together and closely wound up on the stem like a shepherd's crook. Gradually with the increasing warmth they unroll themselves until at last they stand fully outspread. But now and then even in midsummer are seen ferns with their highest points still rolled up. And botanists say that in South America are found whole species of ferns which never fully expand. They unroll for a time, then stop and retain the involution of their upper leaves to the end. Like that are some lives. They unfold beautifully at first. They disclose fine beginnings and kindle high expectations. But their blossoming is deferred. Some un-

toward event befalls them. Some interrupting influence checks them. They never fully expand.

Allow me here to interject a thought which may not at first seem sufficiently pertinent to the matter in hand. Great painters say they cannot put their best pictures on canvas. Musical composers tell of harmonies which ravish their own souls but which they cannot arrange in any score. I am sure that in me are sermons better than I have ever preached or know how to preach. Far within, among the deep mysterious chords of thought and feeling which vibrate below consciousness and which seem to go out into the infinite and to be struck sometimes by fingers of the other world, thence come ideas, emotions, stirrings of wonderful impression to my own soul, but too vague and indistinct for expression to you. This is nothing peculiar in me.

Brethren, I tell you we are all pretty small, but the smallest of us is somehow overarched and horizoned by the infinite and everlasting. Our minds are like the earth, which is solid and demonstrable enough beneath our feet, but which above our heads stretches up and widens away into infinitudes and amplitudes of far fathomless mysterious sky. We are all conscious of emotions we cannot utter, thoughts we cannot express, powers we cannot manifest. Especially conscious of them are we at such times as our souls are lifted up by some majesty of nature, some power of human genius, some revelation of God.

“Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.”

Critics have puzzled their brains over the meaning of these lines and tried to discover the connection between the breaking of the ocean surges on the shore and the arising of unutterable thoughts and feelings in the mind of the poet-beholder. The connection seems plain enough where we are now standing. It is infinitude in the ocean awakening the sleeping strings of the infinite in the human heart. It is deep calling unto deep. Which one of us has not felt something like it when gazing upon the snowy summits of the everlasting mountains or standing upon the shore of the deep and dark blue ocean?

“Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.”

But now why have I mentioned this? In order to show how we all carry unused spices through life. We have powers and possibilities which do not get their full realization and manifestation in this world. We are like the ferns. We cannot yet unfold the highest points of our natures. And if the highest points of our natures be the life and glory of Christ within us, as they are if we are Christians, how can we expect to unfold them here? But we must not anticipate our thought.

Approaching the subject from another point of view, consider how many persons are putting aside their personal interests and devoting time, labor, money to promote the interests of others and help forward "the lagging causes of God." We are always remarking upon the selfishness of human nature. I am impressed with the unselfishness of men and women. I am touched by the sight of persons who are thoroughly, sincerely and unstudiedly devoting themselves to the good of others, often outside of their own families. I see persons every day giving the supreme place in their affections and motives to the love of Christ and the things of His kingdom. Nothing is so dear to them as their Master's name. They are willing to teach, to go from house to house, to spend time, to give money, to take trouble, to assume responsibility to do anything at any time, at any sacrifice of self, for the sake of their Lord and His Church. Their hearts and lives are free-will offerings to God and mankind.

But strange as it may appear, they are not always permitted to offer them. By one cause or another they are prohibited from doing what they have prepared themselves to do and what their hearts prompt them to do. Sometimes it is want of recognition or appreciation which holds them back. In almost every community are men who after serving their brethren most unselfishly both in public and private receive, in place of the grateful recognition they have reason to expect, nothing but the ingratitude and thankless

criticism of those whom they have sought to help. It may be there are those in this church who are bringing such unused spices to the Master's service. It may be there are persons well qualified to teach who would love to have six little ones gathered around them every week in the Sunday class and lead them to the Good Shepherd's care, but their services are not sought, their efforts are not valued. It may be there are those who weep over Jerusalem like the Lord and long to gather the unsaved but they are not permitted to speak a word to them.

Then how many, after thoroughly furnishing themselves for life's work, are prohibited from service at the very entrance of their labours by some strange providence! Just as they are about to cross the Jordan of struggle and seize the bright prospects which have long filled their eyes and swayed their souls, they fall like Moses on the verge of their hopes. My most intimate friend in Princeton, I think I have elsewhere mentioned the fact, was a young man of gifted intellect, rare accomplishments and wonderful singleness of eye toward his Lord and Saviour. He had just been inducted into the office of the Holy Ministry under circumstances that betokened an eminent career. While traveling in the state of Pennsylvania the railway coach in which he was the sole occupant became detached from the train and plunged down an embankment and he was instantly killed. How many missionaries have sickened and died on their way to their fields! How many have fallen by the hand of

violence almost as soon as they reached them! How many precious spices have been carried to Africa and China and poured out there on the ground!

Before closing this part of my subject I would like to take our thought for a moment into the very heart of Christian experience. That any person can truly turn to God and surrender himself into the divine Hand and set about doing His works without receiving the conscious presence and communion of God into his soul, this from many passages in the Bible and from almost everything one hears in the pulpit, would seem to be an impossibility. And yet I know I am looking into the faces of such persons now. Here are true Christians, numbers of them, who draw near to God every day, but God does not seem to draw near to them. They place the offering upon the altar, but there is no answer by fire. They travel on in the path of duty from day to day, but no divine companion approaches them on the way to Emmaus or the way to any city. They hear others speak of walking with God and of having a real interchange of sensible communion with God and they wonder if the utter lack of such experience proves that God does not know them and that they have no part in His salvation. Of all the unused spices of life, these of the unrecognized unvisited soul waiting at the door of the Father's House, unblessed and unable to go away without a blessing, are the most difficult to bear and to understand. Why this long exclusion from God? Why this strange incompleteness of the di-

vinest life? Why this joyless nonfulfillment of the soul's holiest cravings?

Perhaps someone who is now listening to these words is trembling with expectation and thinking that the word for which he has looked and waited in a thousand sermons is to be finally spoken in this sanctuary this morning, and the perplexity of his life is to be removed forever. Do not expect so much of any man, my brother. No man can tell you all you want to know. No man can reveal the mysteries which God has put in His own power and reserved to Himself. But I want to turn your eyes to two or three general principles which are often forgotten but which seem to me divinely adapted to strengthen the faith and comfort the hearts of those whose offerings appear to be refused.

The first of these principles is that God looks not upon the deed but upon the will. Jesus saw the Marys preparing their fragrant offerings and watching the Sabbath out "that dark and lonely day." He saw their devotion rising early Sunday morning while it was yet dark to fulfill their thoughts of love. The thick gloaming did not hide from His eye a step of their lonely path to the sepulchre. And although their gifts were not needed, their love He received and treasured where He keeps every precious thing. He saw what they would have done and accounted it. To name their offerings unused spices is really a misnomer. They were used, used in a high mysterious way that never entered their minds to conceive.

“Their spices rose a perfumed breath
Up to the Holy Place,
Their thought was read where is no death,
Where glory follows grace.

And on these spices we may read,
Through all the times and lands,
Heaven sees the will and not the deed,
And reckons hearts, not hands.”

Yes, my brother, God reckons hearts. He counts not what you have been but what you have wanted to be, not what you have done but what you would have done. If you have really desired to do some of God's work and make your life a blessing to the world and have not been permitted to fulfill your heart's wish, God sees not the hindered act but the holy wish, and His love fills out all that your love thought to do. If you have really desired God to come into your soul and draw you into the very sanctuary of divine love and holiness and the blessed privilege has been withheld, God considers not the separation from Him which you have mourned but the communion which you would have tasted and enjoyed. In a word, God gives all our unavoidable failures the effect of success and does for our imperfect beginnings and unfulfilled designs what the master sometimes does for his pupil's incomplete drawing. He fills out the meagre outline and carries the faint irregular strokes up into the beauty of the finished picture. There are no incomplete lives in His sight, no unrealized visions, no unfulfilled aims. He makes all complete and sees every work of man as the worker's heart devised it.

There is a second principle. God regards not success but character as the chief end of blessedness of life. Success is a very desirable thing, my friends. Success is the grateful end of labor and I do not intend to disparage it. But success is not all. It is not the great thing, at least to the worker himself. To others it may be very important that you should reach your noble ends and realize your high aspirations. But to you there is something more important than realization. Character is more important. Spiritual worthiness and perfection of soul are more important. The good that is put into your hands in the form of success is a poor possession compared with the good that goes down into your soul in the form of purified desires, disciplined powers, greatened capabilities. And do you not know it, a great deal more often goes down into your soul when nothing at all is put into your hands, when your self-sacrifice for others receives no reward of recognition, no response of human gratitude, when you are driven down for your reward to the knowledge of the blessedness of self-sacrifice itself, whether recognized or unrecognized, honored or despised. That is character, that is likeness to the Father and to the Son, and it is worth more to you than all the rewards that can possibly be heaped upon you. When you are struggling in obedience to Christ, and without any conscious enjoyment of Him are continuing faithful to Him and finding your satisfaction in doing His will though it be in darkness, then, be well assured of it, you are honoring Christ more

and are being perfected more in your own inner spiritual being than if all your desires were fulfilled and you were gazing into the visible glory of God's face. Ah friends, to be true and faithful is more than to accomplish. To live in the essence of religion is better than to live in its rewards. To be obedient is higher than to be happy. Character is nobler than success. Have you not felt the truth and reality of this by the presence of some beautiful character sent straight from God who long ago perhaps was sitting by your side in this sanctuary?

There is another greater principle, though I cannot here apply it. Not in this world but in yonder Heaven of God are we to find the full completion and satisfying fulfillment of our lives. Abraham left everything behind him and went out from his own country to possess a land which God promised to give him. All he took possession of in this world was a grave. Moses gave up the honors of Egypt and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter for the sake of leading God's people into a glorious inheritance. All he ever realized of it on earth was a distant vision of it from the summit of Mount Nebo. The disciples of Christ forsook their fishing boats and gave up all things for the sake of sitting on thrones in their Master's Kingdom. The thrones which they sat upon were martyr's flames.

Every supernatural life of man measured by its fulfillments in this world is a failure. Only that which is wholly of the earth finds its satisfaction in

the earth. All who would live greatly and follow after hopes of perfection and blessedness must expect to attain them through present failures and disappointments, through empty aching hearts and weak and wearied hands.

But what are these, what are all earth's failures and struggles, toils and sorrows and cares, in comparison of the blessedness of Heaven? O, I am persuaded that with one view of the Uncreated Beauty in our eyes, one feeling of the absence of all sin from the soul in our consciences, one transformation into the Divine Likeness on our faces, one breath of that air "where work is rest and every movement a song" in our breasts, and all we have endured and suffered here will be swallowed up and forgotten forever. Then we shall find that nothing we have ever done or thought to do for the Lord has been lost, and that the very failures and disappointments which have seemed to hide Him from our eyes and make it impossible for us to serve Him have secretly prepared our eyes to behold Him and our souls to serve Him always.

"For though unused their fragrant store,
Yet well might they rejoice,
Since they the first who saw the Lord
The first who heard His voice."

IDEAL AIMS.

Fellow teachers and fellow scholars, it gives me real pleasure to stand here to-night, for I will not disguise the genuine feeling of my heart that in being invited to address you I have been highly honored. It has seldom fallen to my lot to speak to an audience of persons who may be so justly characterized as the nation's character builders. The creators of Venice were her architects. But the architects of America are her schoolmasters. Indeed in our whole social system I know of but one human influence of such extensive and powerful operation as that of our American teachers—that other is the influence wielded by American mothers.

I am relieved of all perplexity in choosing my line of thought to-night by the form of the invitation with which the officers of your association honored me. They requested me to repeat on this occasion some thoughts which I had presented in another place on the Ideal Aims of Life.

Every human life has an ideal. Every bark on the sea of human existence sights golden islands. Every

An address given before the State Teachers' Association, Lacrosse, Wis., and at Ripon College; Lake Forest University; Rockford Ladies' Seminary, Ill.; Waukesha Academy, Wis.; Fox Lake Seminary, Wis.; Delaware Literary Institute, Franklin, N. Y., June, 1884; used as a sermon in the Central Presbyterian Church, Rochester, 1881, and the Presbyterian Church, Nineveh, N. Y., 1883; also preached as a baccalaureate sermon at Whitney's Point Academy, N. Y., 1886; Binghamton Central High School, 1886; Union School, Greene, N. Y., 1896.

man, woman, child paints a dawning and sunrise on the future and follows the light of something that goes above and before. The Italian beggar in his rags and filth has his ideal, though it be nothing higher than to lie in the sun and eat macaroni. The girl who serves fixes her eye upon something above her service. Some vision passes before her face and her heart leaps upward in desire. There is a glory and a dream streaming radiance and inspirations down into the eyes of the boy following the furrow of the plow.

To wear rich dress, to own a carriage, to live in a large house, to grow wealthy and enjoy ease and elegance, these, though material aims, are none the less ideals to those who cherish them. Whatever constitutes a man's highest good, whatever controls the direction of his thoughts, fixes the desire of his heart, is his ideal. And so the world is full of ideals. If they were visible all the air around us would be evidently cut through and through by human aims, aims near and far, low and high, feeble and swift, flying like winged spirits in every possible direction and darkening the atmosphere.

Of this innumerable host and great cloud of ideals not one but is secretly drawing out a mind and developing a character. In youth we are anxious for the best scholastic instruction. Later in life we set great store by principles, conditions, habits. Meanwhile life and character are being determined by something quite different from any of them. It is

what a man lays to heart and lives by, what in his inmost soul he loves, covets, desires, aims for, that in the end molds his being and shapes his destiny. Our aims are our real educators. Our architects are our ideals. What character builders they are! Imaged before the mind's conception continually, the plastic forces of thought and feeling catch their features and transfer them to the mind itself. They melt into the soul and impregnate it. And what revealers of character our ideals are! Surer than our acts. Men often act for a reason and agreeably to custom. But these ideals show their souls and register their exact essential value.

But now why have anything to do with ideal aims? Why not rather, as some sneeringly say, leave this feeding on fantasies to poets and painters and dreamers, and for our part attend to the business of our crafts, trades, professions, and try to help on the practical work of life? Certainly every man requires to have his special work, requires to submit himself to the yoke of some craft, trade or profession. In the great majority of cases the necessities of food and raiment make this imperative. But besides that the highest ends of life require it. Intellectual vigor and moral health demand the conserving influences of a useful employment. No nature can subsist on leisure or float in sunbeams. Shakespeare himself must stand squarely on the ground. Michael Angelo must exercise his five senses and be familiar with facts. The soaring faiths and fervors of St. John

must rest on sensible realities which he has seen with his eyes, heard with his ears, and his hands have handled of the Word of Life. Even the cherubim of Ezekiel sometimes required to let down their wings and stand on their feet.

But because man must needs stand on the ground, sunlight and starlight are not therefore impertinences to him. He does more work and better work whose windows open to the irradiations of an ideal attainment. The horse submitting to move round and round in the treadmill with aimless eye and languid neck is not the highest type of practical energy. Far grander spectacle is a boy in college reaching forward night and day toward the prize of his ambition, counting labor nothing and rest nothing, health nothing and sickness nothing, blinding his eye to nothing and sickness nothing, blinding his eye to present hardships and present pleasures, seeing nothing but the master-light of the future and throwing himself forward with all his powers toward that. Besides a man is something more than his trade. The human soul cannot be fully expressed in terms of blacksmithing or shoemaking or bookmaking. "There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding."

And it is the very voice and stimulus of that inspiration to perpetually protest against the actual attainments of human life and to keep alive in the secret soul of man the vision of an ideal perfection. It is given to the brutes around us to lie down in

placid repose and chew the cud of ruminating contentment. But in man there is something—whether it be a reminiscence from Eden lost or a presentiment from a golden daybreak to come I will not say—but something haunting, something goading there certainly is which ever more urges the human soul toward an attainment and a beauty surpassing the realities of experience. Accordingly youthful minds and minds of the nobler sort throughout life have ever been idealizing minds. They have craved something above the low contentments of a sense-bound existence. They have apprehended for themselves and for others the vision of a good brighter and better than eye hath seen or ear heard. If in some instances this craving after an ideal good instead of allying itself with all that is true and noble has been seduced by attractive delusions and prostituted to loathsome embraces, yet its very crimes have testified to the energy of its impulse and the greatness of its origin. If nearly all ideal seekers have failed to realize everything they aimed for, they have at least had the joy of the pursuit, and their failures, transcending all other successes, shine evermore as the fairest tokens and highest glories of our humanity.

Now if it be a fact that every life must of necessity have some ideal aim and that aim whatever it be determines the worth and beauty of the character, then it becomes an inquiry of closest concern to every person and especially every young person what this governing power and guiding light shall be.

There are in general three kinds of ideal aims. One class of minds live to the phenomenal world. They make matter all. They fix the supreme end of life in the acquisition of external goods. They conceive nothing more ultimate than bodily health and wealth. And wealth, which was once a word of large meaning, which was *weal* and *welfare*, has become so shrivelled up in their etymology as to be synonymous with houses and barns. They adore new inventions, sanitary improvements, rapid locomotion, railroads, steam, coal, and the electric telegraph. Whatsoever things are healthy, whatsoever things are economical, whatsoever things are labor-saving, whatsoever things enhance the value of real estate, whatsoever things can be turned into money, if there be anything that will bake bread and if there be anything that will quicken the liver and enable one to dine nicely and sleep soundly, think on these things. For a man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesses. And man himself, created a little lower than the angels, consists of palate, nose, touch, eye and ear, these five and no more.

This is the underlying philosophy of much modern life, a life which idolizes forces and overlooks powers, which worships means and forgets ends, which teaches that man was made for things and not things for man, which materializes and vulgarizes the very mould of the forehead and lustre of the eyes and tones of the voice. And not only the present but the future is impoverished. If America shall con-

tinue to be a word to haunt the imagination and tingle in the ear, if boys and girls of the twentieth century shall dilate with inspirations about the fire-side or have their Plutarch and Carlyle under the desk at school, they will not owe it to a tendency which worships money bags and machinery and breeds sots and cowards. "Every day," says Mr. Froude in his *Leaves from a South African Journal*, "I grow more convinced that all political questions resolve themselves into one. What object do the ruling powers set before themselves? Is it to produce a noble race of men or is it to produce what they call wealth? If they aim chiefly at the second they will not have the first. Every wise man, whether Solomon or Plato, Horace or Shakespeare, has but one answer on this subject. 'Where your treasure is there will your heart be.' Let wealth be the sublime end of our existence and no new English nations will be born in English colonies, England itself will become a huge grazing farm, managed on economical principles, and the people, however rich they may appear, will be steadily going down to what used to be called the devil."

There is a second class of minds who look above the material appliances and embellishments of being to the perfection of the being himself. They seek first the inward and personal. Not machinery but manhood is the object of their homage. They exalt man himself as immeasurably greater than all his outward goods put together. They lift up vehement

protest against the prevailing materialism of the age. They denounce Mammon-worship as vulgar and degrading and in their own dialect cry out almost as earnestly as the Divine Voice itself, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" These are the apostles of culture. They are leading writers, artists, naturalists and men of science at the present hour.

Self-culture proposes as our ideal aim a rounded and harmoniously developed human nature. "Perfect thyself" is its watchword. It holds with the old sophist that man himself is the measure and end of all things and that man exists not chiefly for what can be accomplished by him but for what can be accomplished in him and on him. Self-culture calls upon each and every one of us to set earnestly to work completing himself on all sides and raising every faculty and capacity of his nature to its utmost limit of excellence. It seeks to inspire us with a sense of our self-sufficiency and points out our own self-enlightenment and self-accomplishment as the true well-spring of our most satisfying pleasures, ever open at our door and springing at our feet.

Here is a picture of the ideal man sketched by a much-admired master in this school. I call him an ideally educated man "who has been so trained in his youth that his body is the ready servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of, whose intellect is a clear precise logic-engine with all its parts of equal

strength and ready to be turned to any kind of work, to spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of thought, whose mind is stored with the great and fundamental truths of nature and the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty whether of nature or of art, to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself."

This is a high calling. There is something higher, as I hope to convince you before I close. But compared with the ordinary standards to which human lives are directed this is indeed a lofty aim. And when set forth in the clear crystal speech of a Huxley or illustrated by the brilliant and universal genius of a Goethe or warmed into the semblance of life by the poetic enthusiasm of a Matthew Arnold, it is not strange that this ideal of self-culture possesses a great fascination for many young ardent minds who have yet had little experience of the truth about their own natures or the truth of things.

The fatal defect of this aim is the inability to get itself realized. It lacks the dynamic element. It has no sufficient inspiration-force. Like the flowers stuck in the play garden of the child, it looks very attractive for a time but because it has no root it soon withers away. Some of you will be at no loss to understand the reason of this. Man is not an original fountain of power. He is a receiver of

power and a conductor of power. He was made to have current and be in flood. He is strong, he is complete, precisely in the degree that he is lifted out of self, made utterly regardless of self, and put into the flow of the inspiration-torrents of nature, of brotherhood and of God. "Men of extraordinary success," says Emerson, "in their honest moments have always sung, 'not unto us, not unto us.' According to the faith of their times they have built altars to Fortune, to Destiny or to Jesus. Their success lay in their surrender to tides which found in them an unobstructed channel. What seemed to be will and self-seeking was in reality willingness and self-annihilation."

But self-culture separates man from all the great exhaustless reservoirs of thought and feeling and power. It shuts him up in simple selfhood. It starts from self and returns to self. It centres the soul on itself and requires it to evolve perfection from its own internal resources—a thing as impossible as for a sponge suspended in mid air to fill and flood itself or for a plant cut off from the forces of soil and sunshine to evolve its own blossom. The sponge requires to be centered in the sea and given up to the sea, the plant requires to be set in the circle of earth and air, and human spirits require to be set in and be possessed by the infinite and illimitable Spirit.

No doubt a man by painfully bending over his own image may erase some outward imperfections and polish some exterior surfaces, but when it is talked

about furnishing and completing a soul, when the word is self-perfection, a thing we are not able rightly to imagine, much less to embody, the result is sure to be an egotistical finish of veneering indifferently laid on, impossible to keep from falling off and destitute of all reality, strength, and beauty. The idea of self-culture, if I may borrow a forcible figure from Julius Hare, impales a man on his own personal pronoun. Ever present *I* is the stake which is driven through the soul of self-cultured suicide. And what is this but the fulfillment of the old words, "Who-soever will save his own life shall lose it!"

It is another defect of the culture theory that it is for the few and not for the many, for the lettered and not for the simple, for the study and academy, and not for the workshop and nursery. It is a fastidious exclusive aim, which has no room to receive and no welcome to extend to the great multitude of workers whose lot is cast in the humbler places of life, who know little of this world's learning but much, very much of its toil and endurance and suffering. There is privation in the world. There are chambers of protracted and distressing sickness. There are desert places of the affections created not always by the grave. There are deep dark caverns of oppression where beautiful and noble aspirations like underground streams struggle long and heroically but never reach the light of realization.

To the eye of self-culture these are all strange anomalies, blank spaces, lost experiences, periods of

utter and incomprehensible waste. And yet out of these privative conditions we all have seen some men and possibly more women emerge at last crowned with chaplets of strange surpassing hues, "led by some secret way up to the serenest and most beautiful heights of character." O my brother scholars, God exists. There exists and there works in and over our lives a Higher Wisdom than our own. High above all our self-chosen aims and ideals there exists created for each of us in His eternal thought, determined for each of us by one particular mould of being and realizable by each of us under His shaping hand, an ideal of perfection and beauty far excelling anything that has entered into the heart of man to imagine.

I come now to speak of the last and supreme ideal aim of human existence. That was a fine conjecture of the divine Plato that each human personality is the offspring or product of a preconceived plan and eternal idea in the Infinite Mind. Let me illustrate his meaning. When God held the seeds of all vegetation in His hand at the beginning of creation what did He? He informed the Spirit of life which He concealed in the bosom of each germ with a certain plan. In mysterious symbol he wrote in one, rose; in another, palm tree; in a third, pine and so on. And when one unfolded into a thing of beauty and another developed into a son of consolation for the weary traveler of the desert and the next shot up into a magnificent instance of towering majesty, it was simply the manifestation of the thought which God had formed for

each and hidden in each at the outset. So, speculated the great Greek seer, may there not be eternal forms of thought, mysterious conceptions of the Infinite Mind, existing in and for human souls? But the golden fancy of the golden Dreamer is only a dim anticipation of the plain matter-of-fact teaching of the Christian revelation. It is there distinctly set forth that each individual soul contains wrapped up in the centre of his being an original divine ideal of perfection and beauty differentiating him both in the plan and in the results of his unfolding from every other individual and transcending in majesty and glory all his highest conceptions.

“Every human soul,” says Bushnell, “has a complete and perfect plan, cherished for it in the heart of God—a divine biography marked out, which it enters into life to live. This life, rightly unfolded, will be a complete and beautiful whole, a drama cast in the mould of a perfect art, with no part wanting; a divine study that shall forever unfold, in wondrous beauty, the love and faithfulness of God; great in its conception, great in the Divine skill by which it is shaped; above all great in the momentous and glorious issues it prepares. What a thought is this for a human soul to cherish! What instigations does it add to send us onward in everything that constitutes our excellence! We live in the Divine thought. We exist to realize a divine life plan.”

But now arises the question how one is to understand his divine life plan so as to enter into it—how

he is to apprehend his divine life ideal so as to strive intelligently toward it. He cannot apprehend it directly. He cannot yet see it from its upper side. Nor is it necessary that he should. It is not necessary that the soldier should get hold of the secret plan of the campaign in order to his entering into the operations of the battle or sharing in the results of the victory. It is only necessary that he accept with a soldier's fealty and a soldier's pride his general's authority upon him, fixing his position, assigning his duty, bidding him hold that or die.

And so, my friends, to find your way into God's life-plan for you and to be ever reaching forth toward His perfect life-ideal you have but to come trustfully and courageously under the allegiance of His all-righteous will. Be it yours to renounce self, to cease from self-chosen aims and to go forth into life in the strength of this one word—*duty*, and all the rest will follow. Yes, if you ask me to name the highest ideal aim and truest end which any man can possibly set before him, I shall say that as seen from the side of earth as it presents itself now, it consists in the fulfillment of his moral obligations.

Moral obligations are of three kinds. Faith and obedience to God our Father—love and sympathy to man our brother—earnest careful study and reverent use of Nature, our abode. I have no time to dwell upon these obligations in detail. Nor is there any necessity. You are instructed in them from the professor's chair and from the preacher's desk. But I

wish to speak a few words not so much in the way of instruction as in the spirit of brotherhood and congratulation to as many of you as are minded to inscribe high above every other word upon your standard that most sublime and sacred of all words, *duty*.

You have chosen an ideal, young men and women, which takes up into itself all that is good in other aims, which supplements them and makes them perfect. Some of you may have read the grand book on Culture and Religion, which came a few years ago from the hand of the newly elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. If so you will not have forgotten a truth which he dwells much upon and which is well known to all who have reflected on the subject—the truth that the very way to miss some things is to seek them, while to abandon them and rise above them in a higher aim is to surely attain them. Take beauty for instance; aim at being beautiful and you will never reach it. But aim beyond and above it—aim at strength, purity, goodness, and somehow, as if it were an emanation from these higher qualities, beauty of expression appears on the face and grace of action distinguishes the manner. So with happiness—no one ever found real happiness by seeking to be happy. But fountains of sweetest pleasure spring up in the high paths of search after truth and self-sacrifice for the good of others.

Well, precisely so with the ends proposed by self-culture, self-enlightenment, self-accomplishment. He who seeks these things first and highest misses

them, while he who makes the will of God his rule and duty, his ultimate aim, not only gains what he seeks, but finds all truest and loveliest self-perfections gathering upon him of themselves without his being aware how they come. Be sure of it, he exalts and idealizes his own nature most effectually who sinks himself most deeply in submission to his God and in loving service of his fellow beings.

It belongs secondly to the ideal you have chosen to unite you in a bond of brotherhood with your parents at home, with one another here in school, and with all the noblest spirits of the race.

One of the most pathetic spectacles I have ever been called to witness has been when fond parents and sisters have toiled late and early, denying themselves, to send a son and brother to college, and that young man has come home after a course of study cold, contemptuous, cynical, the old faith gone, the former sympathy dead, and a smitten family are compelled to see that the pride of the household has chosen for himself a far other road than that in which they are traveling and in which they had hoped he would travel with them and lead them.

A thousand seeds must fall into the ground and be watered in tears that one may ripen to the full ear. A thousand soldiers must fall and lie in the trenches that one may triumphantly mount the breach. But they are satisfied to lie there, their hearts will thrill and leap upward to join him when they see their brother bearing the sacred banner above the scaled

heights, because they know it is a victory at once his and theirs. And in like manner the numbers who must toil at home unseen for every privileged one who is permitted to climb the heights of knowledge and wisdom are well content to toil there, will even find their joy in toiling there, if only the tie of brotherhood between him and them be preserved, if only they may see their dearest hopes cherished in his attainments, the highest aims of their souls and of humanity advanced by his successes. For brotherhood is not by equality, not by likeness, but by giving and receiving. It is when souls that are unlike, conditions that are unlike, possessions that are unlike are bound together in one noble whole by all seeking the same ultimate ends and by each receiving something from and of the other's gifts and the other's glory.

Finally you have espoused an ideal for the realization of which is working a higher Wisdom than your own. You see yonder sculptor in the midst of his marbles. One is far advanced toward completion, another is in the midst of the work, while still another was commenced but yesterday. But how he loves them all! He would not have you lift a blow upon them. What! are pieces of dead stone then so dear in his eyes? O no, it is not that, but the living conceptions which his genius has implanted in the stones and which he is purposing to bring out upon them. This is to be a Columbus, that an Abraham Lincoln, the other a St. John. These ideals are what he sees and loves.

Brother scholars, it is my faith and joy to believe that I am standing in the presence of hidden ideals of the Infinite Mind more precious to Him than words can tell. I know that over and above all you are planning and working to do for yourselves, God by wondrous strokes and mysterious influences is working upon you and raising you up to His own ideal.

You and I may not be able to see how this work is going on for it is hidden from human eyes. It is said that when Michael Angelo was decorating the Sistine Chapel, the Pope demanded that the scaffolding should be taken down that he might know what was being wrought, for he declared that he could see nothing but boards and ropes, lime and mortar and dust. But the great artist heeded neither his entreaties nor his threats but toiled on silently and patiently by day and by night, week after week, month after month, bringing out his wondrous creations until the work was done. Then when all things were finished he gave the order and the workmen came and the scaffolding was removed, and behind it was as if one saw the heavens opened and looked into the New Jerusalem. So with God's work on human souls. The scaffolding is kept up until the work is done, until the finished ideal is ready to shine out in perfect characters, to the glory and delight of the Great Artist.

GOD'S SELF-GIVEN NAME.

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” Exodus 3: 14.

I do not take this self-declaration of the Infinite and Eternal One for our thought this morning because I seem to myself to have comprehended the measure of its meaning and to be unable to show you all there is in it. No man can show all there is in any name of God. It would not be a name of God if he could. And this above other divine names is inexplicable because it is essential in character, because it refers not to any attitude or relation of God to others, but to His own inner nature. It goes above and beyond what God is to the universe, above and beyond what he is to our souls. It describes what God is in Himself, what He was in His solitary self-sufficing eternity before we had any souls to be lost or saved, what He would continue to be though the whole universe and every finite spirit in it were

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turned back into the abyss of nothingness. It is a very great and mysterious name. And I do not know that I should try to approach it did I not feel that being a name which God has given to Himself and a name by which He told Moses He desires to be known amongst all generations of men, it must therefore contain the deepest practical lesson which the human heart has to learn. Let us then think a while over this self-given name of God. The more we think upon it, if we think aright, the more we shall be at once humbled and exalted, humbled in our outer self-consciousness, exalted in our inner God-consciousness, raised in spirit and thrown upon the knees in the body.

It is a remarkable fact to begin with, that we do not know how to pronounce correctly the self-given name of God. We only know that the pronunciation we have is incorrect. We pronounce it as we find it written in the Hebrew Bible, Jehovah. But the Jews never wrote it correctly. They held it a capital crime for any person to do so. Only the High Priest, and he but once a year, might rightly pronounce the self-given name of God. For the rest the scribes wrote it and the people pronounced it by taking the vowel sounds of another name of God and uniting them with the radicals of this name. And so the true pronunciation is lost and never can be authoritatively fixed.

What has been said of the pronunciation of this Name may almost be said of its meaning. There is a

meaning, a circle of clear intelligible meaning, but surrounding that is another larger circle of vagueness and inexplicable mystery. The Name is formed from the first person singular of the present tense of the substantive verb, I am. And this is amplified into I AM THAT I AM. Now here is a starting point of definiteness. I AM, as I hope to show you before I sit down, is the beginning of a profound and far-reaching suggestion. It starts out with a wondrous sweep as if it were going to be a great revelation, then suddenly, after one dazzling gleam, it hides itself behind a cloud of deeper obscurity than ever. Whether we understand I AM THAT I AM as equivalent to I am what I must be, or I am what I have ever been, or I am what I have pledged myself to be, it matters little in point of meaning. In any understanding of it, it is an expression going out in vague and boundless mystery. What if it had so to go out, what if no word, no human speech, could contain all that Jehovah is and all that He wishes to be to those who love and serve Him? What if I AM THAT I AM were really a truer, more accurate expression of the infinite largeness of God's mind and heart than any more definite description of Him could possibly be? When Manoah asked after the name of the angel of the Lord, his thought was at once estopped and greatly elevated by the answer, "Why askest thou after my name, seeing that it is wonderful?" It is a great thing for us to learn that God is larger than our ideas of Him. We talk about God

so often and so familiarly that we think we understand Him quite well. But the truth is that what we know about God, greater and better than all our other knowledge as it is, is almost nothing at all compared with what we do not know about Him. Teach a child the alphabet, show him how to spell out some small words, and how much does he then know of the riches and resources of the English language as spread out upon the pages of Shakespeare and Bacon and DeQuincey and Ruskin? Give a person the first lessons in music, teach him to strike the notes of the gamut, and what is his conception of the heights and depths, the powers and possibilities of harmonious sound contained in the compositions of Mozart and Beethoven and Sebastian Bach? What we know about God, what we know about any nearest attribute of His being, His omnipresence, His eternity, His mercy is but the least and lowest part of what that attribute is. It is a necessity of the case that every Name of God should terminate in vagueness and mystery. His Name like Himself must be enfolded in clouds and darkness.

But as I said there is a starting point of definiteness here. I AM is a word of clear intelligible meaning. It implies first of all existence, independent, self-contained existence. It is equivalent to saying, "I exist neither by creation or by derivation. I receive life from nothing. I have it inherently, independently, originally. Myself am life and the giver of it to all things." You and I, my friends, if we weigh

our words, cannot say I AM and add nothing more to it. We can say I am this or that, I am a man, I am a woman, I am a child, or I am a lawyer, I am a merchant, I am a mechanic. We can say, I am born, I am created, I am preserved. In other words, I am dependently, I am permissively, I am conditionally. But to say, I AM, simply meaning what the words mean, separate, solitary, self-sufficing existence, we dare not. But because God is all contained in Himself, because His existence is His own root and crown, because He is uncreated existence and another existence is His gift, therefore from His lips can go forth the sublime words I AM.

But again I AM implies eternal existence. In our human grammars the verb of existence passes through three stages of time. We say of ourselves, I am, I was, I shall be. But God's being can not be conjugated. He passes through no stages of succession. To him there is nothing gone, nothing to come, "no varied future yet un-lived, no lapse of buried past." To Him there is no I was, no I shall be. He knows but one tense, the all-including eternal present. He therefore, and He alone can say I AM.

Unchangeableness is another fact contained in this Name. I AM WHAT I AM has a tone of immutability about it that strikes the ear as it falls. It seems to say "I am far above that temporary, changeful, uncertain state of being in which you exist and of which you are often so weary, that state in which minds are fickle, hearts inconstant and nought doth endure

but mutability. I change not. The law of ebb and flow is outside of my being. There is no altering my nature, no increasing or decreasing my perfections, no varying my thoughts, feelings, purposes.

‘Change finds no likeness to itself in me
And makes no echo in my full eternity.’

I am what I have been and ever must be, the same yesterday, to-day and forever.”

Here I pause a moment to express what I am sure must be your feeling as well as mine in view of these great truths of God which have now passed before us. I pause to express my satisfaction and comfort that there is an infinite, eternal, unchangeable Being in this universe and that He has cared to speak to you and to me. He, the I AM, the Self-Evident One, who needs no one and nothing, has stooped from His throne in Heaven to tell you and me and millions of mankind about Himself. He wishes us human beings to know who He is. He wishes, shall I say it, to raise us up from the death of sin and the transitoriness of earth to participation in His own eternal life of perfect righteousness and perfect blessedness.

“O thou art very great,
To set thyself so far above;
But we partake of Thine estate
Established in Thy strength and in Thy love:
That love hath made eternal room for me
In the sweet vastness of its own eternity.”

But we have not yet reached the summit of the mysterious Name. We have one more ascent to climb.

The personality of God is really the highest point of significance here. What is personality? Something more than being. Not every being is a person. But every self-conscious, self-determined being, every being that thinks and feels and acts out of a sense of freedom is a person. Self-consciousness, intelligence and freedom of will, these constitute personality. But there is a shorter method of testing personality than the analytical one. Any being that can use the personal pronoun "I" or be properly addressed as "thou" is a person. God is such a being. He can say in the fullest meaning of the terms I AM. My brothers, God is not an immense vagueness, not a vast web of natural laws, not a flow of blind instinctive force universally diffused without head or heart. God is a self-conscious Brain, a self-determined Will, a throbbing Heart. God is a Thinker, a Seer, a Hearer, a Lover, a Hater. God is a living Person, a moral Governor, a pitying Father, a holy Judge. You cannot read a chapter in the Bible without receiving a distinct impression of the moral personality of God; you cannot turn a leaf in your own conscience. Why is it that when you have done right you feel strong though all men scowl and hiss? Why is it that when you have done wrong you feel responsible not only to yourself and your fellow men but to Something or Someone beside? Who and what is that mysterious Power that holds you to the obligation of doing right and forces a moral judgment upon every one of your acts? Is it a law, is

it an idealized abstraction, is it anything unconscious or semi-conscious? No, my brother, you cannot feel a sense of shame and guilt before electricity, or before a tree, or before a bird. Nothing less than a person, a holy person, can lay His hand on the inmost springs of your being and make you strong or weak, happy or unhappy, by His approval or disapproval.

And not only conscience and the Bible bear witness to the moral personality of God. The created universe itself flashes the divine reality in our faces on every side. "How do you know," a Bedouin was asked, "that there is a personal God?" "In the same way that I know on looking at the sand whether a man or a beast has crossed the desert, by the footprints in the world around me." Look at the upturned faces in this sanctuary this morning, look at these shadows of immortal images, these homes of conscious intelligence, palpitating thought, passionate affection, lofty aspiration. He who made these thought-flashing faces, does He not think? He who formed these over-full hearts, does He not feel? He who created these living men and women and endowed them with intelligence, love, courage, ideality, moral perception, does He not possess the powers which He has bestowed?

I am amazed that some men, some scientific men, who find this universe so full of thought and beauty and marvellous intelligence, cannot find an intelligent Maker of it. And yet I partly understand it. They

are so fascinated by the law, the order, the harmony, the manifold variety and the infinite adaptation of God's works of creation that their minds are completely absorbed in the work and lost to the Worker. In their admirations of His footprints they lose sight of the divine Traveler Himself whose trail they are following.

And so the biologist spends laborious days and weary nights in turning the leaves of the book of physical life and deciphering its contents and then tells us as the result of his research that physical life is the product of blind development. As if a book which only the best heads can read had been written by no head at all, but only by matter and force working in natural selection. And so the star-eyed astronomer turns his telescope to the heavens and sees a majestic order, planets circling about suns, systems revolving around systems, all moving in perfect regularity in their prodigious pathways. He sees this kosmos of wonder and beauty and power, but sees no mind creating and controlling it. And yet that same man cannot examine a theory of the heavens, cannot look at a picture, cannot read a poem, without seeing in it the work of a personal intelligence. The discoveries of Isaac Newton, the creations of Raphael, the conceptions of Dante, he knows could only come from a mind. But Isaac Newton and Raphael and Dante themselves together with all that inspired and informed them he thinks might come from nothing but chance and clay.

My friends, the thought we are now considering is an intensely practical one. If God be nothing more than the unconscious soul of the universe or the nexus of laws by which the universe is governed, then all acts of religious worship such as are paid in this sanctuary from Sunday to Sunday are simply farcical. We may as well spare ourselves the folly of praying to a deaf and dumb principle. Our creeds and confessions, our ascriptions and doxologies, are no more to such a God than the sound of the winds or the murmur of the ocean. Our tears, tears of penitence, tears of sorrow, are just like drops of sap exuding from a wounded tree. But if God be a living intelligence and almighty heart, if He be our Father in heaven, of whose boundless truth and love and tenderness all earthly fatherhood is but an image and a token, then praise is comely. We may make a joyful noise before Him in the day of thanksgiving, for He hears us. We may cry to Him out of the depths, for He has a heart that can feel our pain and a hand that can deliver us out of all our trouble.

Again, it is from the conviction of a personal God that all earnest human work takes its highest stimulus and motive power. When the belief in a personal God goes out of a man, every high resolution, every heroic impulse, every fine enthusiasm, every fresh inspiration goes out with it or close behind it. And why should they not? No invisible eye watches him, no sympathizing heart nerves him, no guerdon awaits his noble deed. Life has no responsibility, prayer no

spring, duty no recognition. The present is a purposeless existence and the future a hopeless blank. What is left for such a person but to eat and drink and die?

But let a man be thoroughly convinced that a personal Being has placed him in this world and that he has a heaven-appointed work to do, let him be persuaded that above all that is dark and inexplicable and sad there sits supreme an all-wise, almighty, and all-merciful Being, who watches him, loves him, guides him and is intent upon leading him onward and upward, and if there be any spirit and efficiency in the man it will be stirred and empowered.

“Men have always toiled best,” says Peter Bayne, “and fought best when moved by impulses holding from the Infinite.” It was when amid the battle dust around Antioch or moving along the slopes of Olivet the worn crusader caught the gleam of celestial helms that he became irresistible. It was by the faith of a personal God that Luther defied Rome, that Gustavus Adolphus poured out his great heart for his country’s freedom, that the Puritans fought at Naseby and founded a New England on these inhospitable shores. “I AM hath sent me unto you,” said Moses to the Hebrews in Goshen. They were not Swiss patriots, not the countrymen of William Tell and Arnold Winkelried whom he was addressing. They were poor ignorant down-trodden broken-spirited slaves, and yet they followed him through the cloven surges, through the howling wilderness,

whithersoever he listed. That Presence in the Cloud by day and in the fiery Pillar by night, that omnipotent I AM drew them and drave them, impelled them and made an immortal nation of them.

Finally it is the fact that God is a personal Being that satisfies the deepest want of man's heart. I seem to see before me what I saw the other day, a husband bending in anguish over the remains of his best beloved one. They have lived together a few happy years. His heart has grown purer and better every day in her sweet society. All his earthly joy was in the sunshine of her smile. And now she lies before him cold, pale, silent, the lingering lines of beauty not yet effaced from lip and brow. In this hour of mortal anguish what does this poor man's heart and flesh cry out for? It cries out for God, for the living personal God. And when the personal God, hearing his prayer, puts an immortal hope in his heart and he sees the heavens opened and beholds his darling alive, and more alive than ever, in that infinite Home, then his heart is overshadowed by immortal love and his agony changes to peace. O my brothers, the heart craves a heart, a Person, an almighty Friend. It craves a seeing Eye, a hearing Ear, a living Breast upon which it may at last lay its weary head and fall asleep like a child in its mother's arms. The heart wants a personal God.

Here I pause. We have considered the self-given Name of God. We have heard Him say I AM. But what He is He does not further say. It is interest-

ing to inquire whether He has ever finished His sentence. The New Testament answers. Jesus Christ connects Himself distinctly in so many words with this mysterious Name. "Before Abraham was, I am." And so the unfinished revelation finds its completion in Bethlehem and Calvary and Christ. The great ladder whose top is above the stars touches also every thing that has strength and beauty, truth and tenderness.

Now I find Christ taking all beauteous objects and saying I am this and that. I am the Vine, I am the Rose and the Lily, I am the Light and the Morning Star, I am the Rock and the River of Life, I am the Shepherd, the Prince, the King. Thus is Jesus Christ the completed revelation, the unveiled glory of God in all things. Nay more, I find Jesus Christ taking all humble believing human souls and saying, I am Abraham's, I am Moses', I am David's, I am Isaiah's, I am Paul's, I am John's, I am every believing man's, every saintly woman's, every trustful child's. Thus is Jesus Christ not only the completed revelation, the unveiled glory of God in all things, but the personal Saviour and everlasting possessor of you and of me.

"And what though earth and sea His glory do proclaim,
Though on the stars is writ that great and dreadful Name,
Yea, hear me, Son of Man, with tears my eyes are dim,
I cannot read the word that calls me close to Him!
I say it after Thee with faltering voice and weak,
The Name of Jesus Christ, this Name I trust and seek."

THE OLD PATHS.

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Jeremiah 6: 16.

We have assembled here to-day, my friends, to dedicate this house to the worship and service of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and to the teaching of the blessed Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I do not know of any precept in the New Testament which expressly enjoins the performance of these dedicatory rites. It is deeply, divinely implanted in our nature, it is a moral instinct, that a structure designed for high superearthy uses should be consecrated to the purpose for which it was reared by special religious ceremonies. We do not expect by these ceremonies to confer any magical virtue upon these walls or to communicate any singular efficacy to the acts and offices which shall hereafter be performed within them. In the Middle Ages there grew up, like the

Preached at the dedications of the new building of the First Presbyterian Church, Cortland, N. Y., 1890, and of the rebuilt First Baptist Church, Binghamton, 1891. Without the introduction referring to the dedication, this sermon was preached in Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Milwaukee, 1872; also in these churches: Presbyterian, Waukesha, Wis., and Manitowoc, Wis.; First Presbyterian, Binghamton, 1884; Central Presbyterian, Rochester, 1884; Central Presbyterian, Denver, 1888; Presbyterian, Union, N. Y., 1888; First Presbyterian, 1890; First Presbyterian, Rochester, 1891; Second Presbyterian, Scranton, 1891; Presbyterian, Owego, N. Y., 1897; Central Presbyterian, Denver, 1898; First Presbyterian, Wilkes-Barre, 1898.

ivy on its walls, mythical stories about the history of almost every statelier church. It is often related how after long meditation the plan of the edifice was at length projected before some gifted person's vision in lines of light, or found traced in the descending dew upon the sparkling sward from which the fabric was to rise. We do not claim any such supernatural prefigurement of the architecture of this building marking its inception, nor do we expect to call down any mysterious properties of heaven upon its completion. At the same time we do recognize in this sanctuary something that remove it from all other buildings and places it on an eminence. We recognize a high holy intention on the part of its builders, an inestimable far-reaching value in its uses, more distinctly and devoutly we recognize a greatness and a sanctity which no elevation of material architecture can ever reach, derived from the august character and promised occupancy of Him by whose blessing the house has been erected and to whose service and glory it is now to be set apart.

I have said that this house is to be dedicated to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the Gospel of Christ is preached in different forms. Besides the well-known religious denominations which divide Christendom among themselves are various views, lights, doctrines, interpretations and illuminations which claim to be new discoveries or higher developments of the truth given us in Jesus Christ. It becomes necessary therefore to be definite and

point out the particular interpretation of the Gospel that is to be taught in this place.

Extending from the Holy Apostles down to the present time is one unbroken line of believers and witnesses, one marvelous unity of belief and confession, one great comprehensive system of truth which differs from all other views in the profound impression it has ever made upon the world, in the transcendent importance which it attaches to religion and in its unchanging indestructible invincible persistence. Called sometimes Pauline Christianity, sometimes Augustinianism, sometimes Calvinism, sometimes Presbyterianism, it is in fact the system of the doctrines of Divine Grace by which man is rescued from a great and awful perdition to a great and everlasting salvation by a great and divine Redeemer. To these doctrines which have been the faith of the Holy Catholic Church from the beginning until now, in the belief of which lived and died Paul, Clement, Augustine, Anselm, Bernard, Luther, Calvin, Pascal, Hooker, Edwards and Chalmers, to these sublime unearthly doctrines of sovereign omnipotent Grace and to the Gospel interpreted in harmony with them we dedicate this building.

And it has seemed to me fitting that the great truths which are to dominate the thinking and teaching of this place should be the topic of my discourse on this occasion. Accordingly I am to speak to you this afternoon on what my text calls the old paths in religion—"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the

ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

We are frequently meeting with persons who have grown tired of the old paths, who are turning away from them and eagerly looking for some new and better way. Such persons are generally impressed with the idea that great advancements have been made or are soon to be made in the matter of religion. They confidently anticipate a vast increase of light and knowledge in the sphere of religious thought. They fully expect that great and important discoveries are about to be made in it. It is thought by some that we are even now upon the edge of a new dawn, that a brighter sky is already lifting and widening and purpling above us, and that the idea of progress in religion, so far from being a vain and hurtful thought to cherish, is a first necessity of every earnest and highly gifted soul.

This is not strange. We live in an age of improvements. Especially in physical science and the useful arts has the present century ushered in a prodigious train of brilliant discoveries. The spirit of the century is a spirit of progress, and no one at all familiar with the history and phases of thought but knows the silent and subtle power of the spirit of an age to pervade and color the thinking of that age even in matters which it had no part in creating and never can have any in improving. So that I do not think we need to be surprised at seeing frequent newspaper

paragraphs and magazine articles breathing the sentiment which Augustus Hare once met with and which he answered vigorously enough. "I met this morning," he says, "with the following sentences, 'An upholsterer now makes much handsomer furniture than they made three hundred years ago. The march of mind is discernible in everything. Shall religion then be the only thing that continues wholly unimproved?' What," he exclaims upon laying the paper down, "does the march of mind then improve the oaks of the forest? does it improve the mountains? does it improve the waves of the sea? does it improve the sun and stars? The assertion is silly enough. Some things we improve and so we assume we can improve and are to improve all things. As though it follows that because we can mend a pen we can with the same ease mend an eagle's wing. As though because nibbing the pen strengthens it, paring the eagle's wing must also strengthen that. People forget what things are progressive and what unprogressive."

I have quoted this passage from one of the authors of "Guesses at Truth" because it starts an inquiry which underlies this whole matter of improvements in religion and which I mean to follow out with some thoroughness at the present time. The question is, what things does man improve, and what are the things which attempting to improve he invariably perverts? What are the things in which we may seek and expect to push out into new and better paths,

and what are the things in which the old paths show the good way and the nearer we mount up to their beginnings the purer the light they yield us?

In the first place there is this distinction to be made. Those things are progressive in which knowledge is handed down from one to another, but those things in which each one has to go back and begin at the beginning for himself have the least element of progressiveness. There are some things, my friends, there are many things in which we begin where those before us left off. Our fathers labored and we entered into their labors. What James Watt did for the steam engine, what Arkwright accomplished for the sewing machine, every engineer and inventor now-a-days takes as a part of his outfit and capital stock in trade. "A child standing upon the shoulders of a giant may easily see farther than the giant himself." The merest school boy now stands upon the shoulders of Columbus who found a new continent. The most ordinary anatomist sees farther than Harvey who discovered the circulation of the blood. Our first lesson in astronomy is the last triumph of the genius of Galileo, who asserted the revolution of the earth upon its axis. Where John Jacob Astor ended in amassing wealth there William Astor commenced. So in physical science and in useful arts we are born inheritors of the wealth of the past. We have not to break up the ground, prepare the soil and sow the seed for ourselves. We have only to go out and fill our bosoms with the ripened sheaves of others' toil.

The consequence is that in all such things we do not inquire after the old paths. The new are better. We improve upon the old. If we wish to talk about such things, we know more about geography than St. Paul, who was caught up into the third heaven and saw and heard what his mortal lips could never utter, but who thought the earth was no more than a belt of land around the Mediterranean Sea. We know more about natural history than the inspired Psalmist of Israel, who saw God and the works of God's hands and the shadow of God's glory in everything, in cloud and sunlight, in mountains and in forest, in all trees and grasses and beasts and birds, but who could not analyse a single plant or answer the first question about classification. We know more about the solar system than Turretin, the father of theology, whose spirit had wings like a dove and knew well its own nest beneath the shadow of the Almighty, but who could not bring himself to believe in the axial revolution of the earth because he could not see how the birds could find their way back to their nests if the world were always revolving. Yes, in all these lines of inherited knowledge there is progress. We are wiser than our teachers. The newest ways are commonly the best ways.

But turn now to the other and higher kinds of knowledge. Turn to those things where each one must climb up to the original springs of Truth and Beauty and hew out his own rocky cup and put his lips to the crystal draught for himself. What has

the march of mind done for sculpture since the creations of Phidias and Praxiteles? What advancement has been made in painting since Raphael? When is our patent office likely to record a series of improvements upon the architecture of the Parthenon or of St. Mark's in Venice? What orator have these two thousand years produced able to contend for mastery with Demosthenes, what philosopher qualified to sit in the chair of Plato, what poet worthy to stand on the pedestal of Homer? Are Shakespeare and Dante, are Handel and Mozart, are Michael Angelo and Correggio rapidly become outgrown and left behind, or are they like the stars whose light we enjoy but whose paths are higher than we moderns can walk in?

There are fields, my friends, over which the much vaunted reign of progress bears no sway. The march of mind is not discernible here. Rather is progress the other way. The water is purest at its fountains among the mountains where it gushes cold from the rock or bubbles up at the mossy spring. So the nearer we mount up to the first ages and fresh sources of a nation's life and birth the purer and more vigorous and creative are its poets and orators and artists. Accordingly in these things we inquire after the old paths. We reverence the old masters. We study the minds and copy the works of ancient genius. And no man having possessed himself of the old straight-way desireth the new, for, he saith, the old is better. The reason for the absence of progress here is that in

these things one age and one man cannot stand upon the shoulders of another. Every one must stand on his own feet. Advancement is a personal gift and no man can leave the secret of his power to those who come after him. Not that I think we derive nothing from those who have gone before us in these paths. We may and do derive much. But we may not as in science and the useful arts we do, pour another's ripe harvest bodily into our granary. Whatever we take must be as inspiration forces, as seed thoughts to be planted, germinated, and ripened in our own soil. Each one must lay his own foundation, build his structure and carry it to completion for himself. And the real secret of his achievement, the wonder-working gift of his genius, he must carry back to the Giver an undivulged mystery.

I wish now to point out another and deeper line of distinction between the things we may improve and the things that do not admit of improvement. All the things we may expect to improve are such as man's natural faculties are sufficient to find out and carry forward, but where the Lord God Almighty has shown anything from heaven, there improvements are not to be looked for. How to till the ground, how to develop mines, how to build railroads, how to open communication between land, how to establish manufactures and encourage them, how to buy and sell merchandise, how we shall build our homes, increase our property, educate our children—concerning the multitude of such things as these God has not shown

anything from heaven. He has not set His seal upon this or that. He has left the means and methods of these things to be discovered and developed by man's own faculties. There is no "Thus saith the Lord" here. We do not therefore follow the past in these things. We open new and better pathways than those of the past and we may expect those who come after us to break roads into unknown territories smoother and better than ours.

But how to light up a world and beautify it, how to distribute the waters and gather them again in one place, how to guide Arcturus and his sons and bring forth the seasons in their order, how to create life and endow it, how to plant hearing in the ear and form the eye to vision, how to crystallize a diamond and how to round a pearl, how to wing a butterfly, how to fasten a leaf and how to color a rose, these are things which God has spoken. And they remain right where He left them. Time does not improve them. The march of mind does not affect them. The banners of progress do not draw them into its procession. They continue the same from generation to generation. No improvement has been made upon the trees since King David saw them clapping their hands and praising God. The midnight skies were not more sublime last night than when Abraham was led forth into the Syrian night and bidden to turn his gaze unto the countless stars like which his seed should be.

Now, my friends, in the light of these two tests of progressiveness what shall we think about new dis-

coveries and future improvements in religion? I will speak frankly and say that to me they seem simply impossible. I cannot look upon such discoveries as anything more than the will-o'-the-wisps of visionary brains and fatuous desires. I cannot see the slightest probability of our knowing more about religion than our fathers and mothers knew or of the next age knowing more than we. Look at it for yourselves. Religion is a personal thing. It is like learning to talk or to walk. Each man, whatever the age in which he lives, has to begin at the beginning and do the same things. A hundred generations of holy men may have gone before him, but the way of holiness is made none the shorter, none the easier for him by that. He has to come to God, root out sin and do the first things all the same. He has to begin exactly where they began, climb every hill of difficulty and go over the whole ground for himself. His part is just the same as if he were the first man in the world. In short, religion is emphatically one of those things where each one must begin, go on and end for himself.

And then besides, religion is the gift of God from heaven and therefore incapable of improvement. I do not know why it is not quite as reasonable to look in the eastern sky for a new sun or an improved sun as to look for any other source of light and power than Jesus Christ whom God has ordained. I do not know why there is not as much likelihood of someone arising with a new way of bringing children into

the world different from birth as of any different entrance to heaven being discovered than that which is given, "Ye must be born again," for upon both the Almighty has set His seal. So long as the human heart is so constituted as to feel sorry for having causelessly offended its best friend, and so long as a full trustful self-surrender is the highest homage a human soul can pay to any being, so long will penitence and faith and consecration continue to be the unchanging marks of a true religious mind.

I said there was no likelihood of our knowing more about religion than those who first received it. I ought to have said there is a strong probability of our knowing less. Has it ever been the part of man to improve God's gifts? Has it not always been man's work to obscure the light of God? Look at the use which Adam made of God's gift, look at the Jews and observe their treatment of the perfect law of God and the living Son of God, read the history of Christianity after the Apostles, and see how in every case the knowledge of God has fared in this world like a stream which first flows pure and crystal-like from the mountains, grows turbid as it crosses the plain, and finally loses itself in a vast morass. The same fact appears if we look into our own individual lives and the use we have made of God's gifts to us. How many a man on this sanctuary floor feels that he was nearer to God in his childhood than he is now! How many a one reads his own experience in those touching beautiful lines of Wordsworth,

“Trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature’s Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.”

Now my friends, if these things be true, if the hopes of improvements in religion be deceiving and impossible, if clearer light and fresher revelations must be sought by going back to those who first received it rather than by expecting some great thing in the future, and if our true distinction be not in making new discoveries in religion but in being faithful custodians of the faith once delivered to the saints and of preserving it in new lives of holy thought and holy obedience, then we ought to know these things and adjust our minds to the facts. I do not think we can ever be strong tranquil men and women so long as we live in expectation of some great thing to be revealed. We shall be unsettled, impatient, tossed to and fro by every new thing. We shall be incapable of fixing our minds upon ourselves and the practical duties of a holy life. Truth will be nothing unless it excite new hopes, religion nothing unless it open new expectations. We shall live in an intemperate state,

and like all intemperance our excitements will ever promise to make us rich and ever end in making us poor. But let it once be settled in our minds for a certainty that the circle of revealed truth is already completed, that the door is positively closed against the hoping for anything new until He shall come who will come, and we shall begin at once to look at home that we may be found in the right way and prepared to go forth and meet Him at His coming. Sweeter than music to our ears then will be words like these of Jeremiah, "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Before sitting down I wish to express very briefly my reasons for holding by the old paths. The old confessions of faith, the old promises of God, the old Sabbath usages, the old sacraments, the old hymns of devotion, the old acts of piety, the old, old story of the Cross,—I love this old way to heaven, my friends, for one thing because it *is* old. I love these paths because they have been beaten by so many feet of holy men who have left their vestiges on the way. Think what a magnificent train of faithful witnesses, what a long procession of triumphant souls have defiled through heaven's gate by this way—patriarchs and prophets, holy apostles and palm-bearing martyrs, saintly men and women and tender children bound together link to link, life to life, generation to generation. As I stand in the ways and gaze steadily upon this sublime

spectacle of century after century moving through the gates of the City by this way, the faces of a few derisive skeptics and the transient gleam of a few phosphorescent new lights melt from the field of vision, and the voice of my soul and heart is, "This is the train I would follow, this the path I would walk in."

Dear friends, I know you will understand me when I say that in the toil of the journey I sometimes feel a sense of sympathy from the souls who have passed this same way before me, sometimes receive a great thrill of inspiration and hope as stooping down I find the footprints of a Peter or a Mary, the vestiges of a Fenelon or a Madam Guyon, traced upon the same steps of faith and duty which I am now trying to take. Nor will you think it strange if at the Holy Table, next to the communion of the Master of the Feast Himself, I own a joy and comfort from sitting down with St. John and St. Paul, with St. Francis and Savonarola, with Tauler and Melancthon, with Baxter and Boyle and Milton. Nor will it be deemed incredible if I reverence the felt touch of nearer spirits giving sacredness to the time, and confess that these old paths are dearer to me because their every step has been visited by the feet of a saintly mother who long ago passed from my weeping child eyes into the effulgence of God.

Again I love the old paths because they are not man's paths but the paths of Almighty God.

“The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine—so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.”

I feel the truth of that, and it makes the old paths a thousand times more precious to me that they are all given and assured by God and our Saviour. It is not much that the road is attractive and interesting if you must travel every step of it with the constant consciousness of mistake and the vague fear of final loss. But to know that you possess a chart from Him who cannot deceive or disappoint, to feel that your destination is as certain as eternal truth and omnipotence can make it, is a comfort like no other in this world which shakes ever beneath our feet. I look upon those other speculative paths across the meadows and around by the marshes, where voices of the new theology and the new science are calling us, and console myself with the thought that the future will give time enough and light enough to learn where they lead to. But in a world so dense with darkness and thronged with dangers, where the time is so short and the journey so momentous, I am thankful there is one path made by God Himself with divine way-marks at every turn, in which no traveler ever failed of reaching his desired destination. There was Moses long ago. He walked in the old paths, he went by the good way. He finished his course and chanted his dying song, “The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.” With that he

fell asleep and God buried him. And lo, fifteen hundred years afterward how safe he is, how happy, talking with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration!

Finally, I love the old paths because they are for all mankind and are adapted to the feet of every man and woman and child. I like not that in religion which is suited only to the select few. I love those things which, like the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Cross of Christ, contemplate *all*, in which all have a like interest and may find a like satisfaction. I love to breathe the common air, to live under the common skies, to feel that I am one of the many children of a common Father. I love this church the better because it is not a class church or a church of one idea, but a congregation of men and women and children in which the rich and the poor, the high and the low are mingled together, an image and representation of humanity. And so I love these old paths to heaven better because they put us in a common position as members of the family of God.

There is no misty metaphysic here requiring peculiar temperaments to receive it and artificial glasses to penetrate it. There is no catering to culture and intellectualism and the desire to climb up to the skies by some esoteric staircase discernible only by the clever few. Simple as the highest things always are, nearer to the heart than to the head as is everything divine, bowing themselves down where the feeblest intellect can see them and a little child can walk in

them and the whole family of men can come up to heaven together in them, such are the old paths on which the light of God's face ever falls and the call of the Saviour's voice ever sounds and the travelers find rest for their souls.

Here I pause. Your time and thought have been taken up this morning, my friends, with an examination of the grounds for expecting future improvements in religion. But let us never forget that there is a sense in which we may improve religion, just as there is a sense in which we may be said to improve the sun and the sea and the forests and the lightning, not in themselves but in their relations to us. We may place ourselves more fully under the power of the sun. We may make ourselves more familiar with the forests. We may explore the sea and train the lightning. So we may improve religion by giving it larger place in our thoughts, fuller control of our actions, more enthusiastic homage of our lives. We may keep the old paths more faithfully, reverence them more heartily, walk in them more holily, and do more toward bringing others into the good way where they shall find rest for their souls.

STRENGTHENING THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN.

“Strengthen the things which remain.” Revelation 3:2.

“Strengthen the things which remain.” Make the most of what is left. There is more left than you think. Things are never so bad as they seem to one who has just been defeated and denuded. In losing what he cares for most he seems to himself to have lost all. Perhaps he has not even lost the best. Perhaps his misfortune will prove his advantage while it opens his eyes to unappreciated possessions. Many a man has learned by a great loss the value of other things he had too lightly esteemed. The taking away of his idol has removed the scales from his eyes and given him a newer, larger outlook. It was a crushing blow to the disciples of Jesus when that visible companionship with the Master on which they had staked their all was disrupted by His telling them at the Last Supper, “I must go away and leave you, and whither I go ye cannot come.” They were panic-stricken. They were sure they had lost everything. They learned afterwards that their seeming loss was a substantial gain.

There are two ways of taking losses. One way is to hang over what is gone and indulge in pathetic complaints over the irrecoverable. There are men and

women whose life has resolved itself into a mournful retrospect. They think only of what is lost. They live among the graves and lodge beneath the monuments. We hear their melancholy voice in the lines of the poet.

“O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!
Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.”

The other method of meeting losses is to take the eyes off what is gone and fix the mind upon what remains. When Jeremy Taylor was sold out of house and home and his family were driven into the streets he could still say, “What now? Let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, a loving wife and many friends. They have not taken away, unless I list, my merry countenance, cheerful spirit and good conscience. They have left me the providence of God, the promises of the Gospel and the hope of heaven. I still eat and drink, sleep and wake, read and meditate. And having so many causes of joy, and so great, I must be very much in love with sorrow and peevishness if I choose to sit down on my little handful of thorns.” A very good illustration of the principle commended to us in the text, “Strengthen the things which remain.”

I should like to take this principle for a moment

into the sphere of Church life and religious thought. We have lost some things here in twenty-five years. The authority of the Bible, the reverence for creeds, the practice of church-going and confidence in prayer are not what they once were. Changes have taken place and are still going on in men's conceptions of religion and habits of religion. Those of us who are still in middle life can look back and see changes some of which we cannot but feel are for the worse. There is a loss of faith, a loss of conviction of sin, a loss of grip upon eternal realities. Things dear to the religious consciousness and once accepted as fixed facts are now challenged by new scientific and critical methods. There is a disturbing destroying element in the air. We all feel it in greater or less degree, for we are all one family and breathe the same atmosphere.

What are we to do? There are three things, one or other of which some of us are tempted to do. Some are tempted to take the attitude of unintelligent protest against all new ideas that come from the side of science and criticism. They would treat all new truth as Caliph Omar treated the library of Alexandria. He looked at the magnificent collection of books a few moment and then said, "If these books agree with the Koran they are unnecessary, if they disagree with the Koran they are lies; have them all out and burn them up."

Others are tempted to take the attitude of complete surrender. They feel a secret pleasure in seeing

what never was very congenial to them assaulted. "Ring in the new, ring out the old, we never did think much of it."

There is a third class who are simply afraid, afraid of thought and investigation, afraid they will have to give up everything, afraid to hold on and afraid to let go, afraid most of all of their own fears. Because they are troubled they think the foundations of the house must be settling. They make their own fears an argument against the ground of their faith.

My friends, there is a better way than to follow any one of these courses. To stop investigation is impossible and undesirable, to be afraid of it is unworthy, to welcome it as a destructive agency is impious. But to look about and see what remains and use new discoveries to strengthen what cannot be shaken is wise and recuperative. There are certain things that remain unshaken. The Bible remains, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ remains, the deathless soul remains, the truth of worship and reality of spiritual intercourse remain, right and wrong, truth and duty, time and eternity, the great facts of religion all remain. No man need be panic-stricken and look out tremblingly to the setting sun as if the glory of Christianity had departed. It is for everyone who knows in whom he believes to turn his eyes to the east and rising sun, and be strong in the Lord. We need not stand shivering in the face of every announcement of criticism as if it were going to take something from the Bible and from God. All new

discoveries so far as they are true are designed in God's providence to interpret the Bible and bring out its hidden truths. I was asked the other day to join a league organized in New York City to defend the Bible against the encroachments of modern thought. I declined to take part in the movement. I will not take the attitude of opposition to investigation. Nor will I take the attitude of surrender. I will take the attitude of assimilation. I will stand on the immovable rock of what I know by inward experience of its truth, and then I will inquire how these new discoveries confirm, increase and enrich the body of truth which I know. I will strengthen the things which remain. I will believe them more heartily, stand on them more firmly, obey them more loyally, and I will seek to make the new things enhance the riches of the old.

Brethren, it is a mistake to think the Bible is in danger because it is being investigated. It is a mistake to think that faith is departing because it requires a struggle to keep it. Life, true life, is a struggle on every side of it. Constant, unflinching effort is the price of keeping anything that is worth keeping. To keep the old and recognize the new, to prove all things and hold fast that which is good, to gather our faith in and concentrate it upon what cannot be shaken, to strike its roots deeper and deeper in God and His redemption in Jesus Christ by every day's fellowship with Him, this is certainly a lifelong intellectual and moral struggle. But the effect

is growing strength, increasing confidence, deepening peace; and the end is a crown of life.

Secondly, I should like to take the principle, "Strengthen the things which remain," into the sphere of the family. Here, too, new ideas are coming in and there are not wanting signs that give cause for anxiety. Few thinking persons can be blind to the increasing and shameful dissolution of domestic ties. That one out of every eight or ten marriages ends in a divorce court is something to make everyone pause who cherishes the idea of the home as the basis of civilization and bond of moral society. The ideas that some advanced teachers are putting forward, that marriage is not a permanent union but only a dissoluble contract, that love is not a divine gift but only self-interested gratification, that the birth of children is a necessary inconvenience to be checked as far as possible, that "a large family is almost a disgrace, a proper object of sneer and scorn," that the whole root of the family is a mere physical relation, and that the idea of a happy indissoluble union of husband and wife and children embracing the whole life in all its relations is a baseless dream and silly sentiment, all this is nothing less than a complete abandonment of the divine principles on which the Christian family rests and a miserable relapse into paganism.

I am thankful that we may hope that these ideas have not yet leavened American family life and that the majority of our people still cling tenaciously to the

American home with its beautiful and happy influences. But I cannot disguise the fact that these ideas are making progress among us, and that it is not a moment too soon to strengthen the things that remain. I am glad that our Church in General Assembly has undertaken to strengthen the marriage bond by forbidding her ministers to solemnize the marriage of any divorced person or persons except where the divorce has been obtained for causes recognized in the Scriptures and the standards of our Church as sufficient. Though it cannot prevent marriage by civil officers, the fact that thirteen principal Christian bodies are now working together to establish in their practice the stringent Scriptural rule for divorce, will certainly have a tendency to deter many persons from seeking reparation for light or unworthy reasons. It will put a stigma on persons divorced for insufficient causes and on marriages contracted with such persons.

But, dear friends, prohibition is not enough. We shall never eradicate these evils and strengthen the things which remain by mere repression. Not until we come back to the divine idea of the family and see its loveliness and feel its preciousness as God created it shall we make the Christian home what it ought to be. The earthly family was created to be an image of the heavenly. In the home on earth, in the love of husband and wife, of parent and children, were to be reflected the love and blessedness of the Father's Home in Heaven. The home was meant

to be a ladder stretching up toward the great Father-heart of God, whereon angels of aspiration should ascend from earth and angels of light and invitation should descend from heaven.

Brethren, let us try to make our homes what home was meant to be and what it was to most of us in our childhood, the embodiment of all that was pure and good and dear and holy, a charmed circle of mutual affection and spiritual harmony of which the love of God and worship of God was the bond and regulating power, not perfect certainly, not without jarring notes and breaks in the music, but *seeing* perfection, getting farther and farther away from breaks and discords and ever more reaching up toward the full harmony and perfect peace of the Home on high.

But again, I should like to take the principle "Strengthen the things which remain" into the sphere of the nation. It was a long time before I came to see that the State, like the Church and the Family, was a divine institution. I used to think that the State was a human organization, that it belonged to the world and that to be political was to be worldly. When I learned from the Old Testament that the nation is not a mere voluntary association of people but a creation of God, and that the ruler of the nation is not merely a representative of the people but a minister of God to execute a trust according to the will of God, the whole aspect of the nation and of service of the nation was changed to me. I saw that patriotism was not merely loyalty to the nation

but loyalty to God. I saw that political duties, if performed as they ought to be, were services to God.

These truths were brought home to me with revealing power by that struggle for the integrity of this nation forty years ago which we are about to commemorate by once more paying our homage to its fallen heroes and strewing flowers of spring upon their resting places. My friends, the men who went forth into that struggle were not only patriotic and brave and daring, they were servants of God doing and suffering the will of God. They were martyrs as truly as Stephen and Polycarp and Huss were martyrs. They gave their lives for the preservation of a divine institution. They offered themselves to strengthen the things that remained when the things that remained were seemingly few and on the brink of destruction. They sacrificed all they had, home, happiness, life itself, to preserve for us and for the generations that shall come after us a precious gift of God. We owe them all living tributes of sacred and tender recollection. More than this, we owe it to them to see to it that their dying was not in vain, that their work and sacrifice for the nation follows them. Strewing flowers on their graves is a hollow mockery unless at the same time their heroic example inspires us to a stronger love of our country, to a higher estimation of its divine blood-baptized institutions, and to a determined purpose to preserve and strengthen the things that remain. O, if there could be on this coming Memorial Day a solemn con-

secration of all the people of this Republic to expel from their individual lives and from the body politic all the destroying influences of graft, bribery, extravagance, sensuality, polygamy, and to establish and enforce the great principles of liberty, equality, loyalty to law and to God on which the nation was founded, that would be to honor the dead and serve the country in deed and in truth.

We are just now witnessing a humiliating spectacle, a great strike precipitated upon the community for no other reason but to compel a corporation to discharge a faithful servant of many years and to deprive that man of his natural right to earn his living by labor. There could hardly be a more flagrant violation of the fundamental principle of our nation. The fundamental principle of this nation as laid down in the Declaration of Independence is that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Of course it is not meant that all men are equal in stature, capacity, wealth, power or anything of that kind. But it is meant that all man have an equal right to live their lives in their own way, to make the best use they can of their capacities and opportunities, and to enjoy the fruits of their industry without restraint or interference from any other individual or class of individuals. That principle ought to be maintained throughout the length and breadth of this land. And no love of our own ease or anxiety for our

pecuniary interests or desire for votes ought to be allowed to hinder its maintenance a moment. The people of this country ought to stand upright and insist with firm united front that the principle of individual liberty and equality of right shall be everywhere fearlessly and strictly enforced. So shall we strengthen the things which remain and save ourselves from the necessity of establishing them by the dreadful ordeal of civil war.

Before closing I should like to take our thought for one moment into the very heart of individual life and experience. I think the most regretful things we have to remember are the things we might have done but failed to do. The dear heart in the home we might have gladdened by an act of love and tenderness now and then, the bitter cups beyond the home we might have sweetened by little acts of kindness here and there, the wrongs we might have righted, the tears we might have wiped away, the sins we might have hidden, these are things that sadden the memory of our past lives.

You remember perhaps the boy in Mrs. Hemans' poem who says, "O while my brother with me played, would that I had loved him more!" He is told that his brother is now happy in heaven, but that only opens his wound wider and deepens his anguished cry, "O while my brother with me played, would that I had loved him more!" The truest word to have spoken to that child would have been, "Remember you have other brothers, sisters too, still left

on earth, for whom you will feel the same regret when they are gone. Try to love them more now." And the truest word to speak to us men and women who are ready to sink in despair at the memory of our shortcomings toward those we can no longer help, is that there are others who may still be helped. There are other needy you may succor, other wrongs you may right, other sorrows you may heal, other sins you may hide. Turn your regret for the past into present love and present duty. "Strengthen the things which remain."

JESUS HIDING HIS FACE.

“Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.” St. John 8: 6.

It was a morning hour in the temple of Jerusalem. Jesus had passed the night where He spent so many of His night hours, under the starry skies closeted with God among the olive trees. With the break of day He returned to His labors of love in the city and sat down in the temple to teach and heal the people who came flocking to Him even at that early hour. He had just begun His discourse when into the temple square issued a noisy party of scribes and Pharisees, pulling and pushing before them an unveiled, dishevelled, terror-stricken woman. She had been discovered during the night in a flagrant violation of her marriage vow, and they were dragging her fresh from the shame of detection into the presence of Jesus to get His judgment upon her. Pressing boldly through the assembly which He was addressing, they sat their trembling prisoner before Him and asked with a great show of outraged purity, “Teacher, this woman was taken in the very act of sinning. Now Moses in the law charged us that such should be stoned. What is your opinion?”

It was like a foul irruption of sewage into a pure stream. What a moment ago had been a holy place

is now reeking with sensual curiosity, cold-blooded indelicacy, brutality and hypocrisy. The woman, as any woman in the East unveiled and exposed before a crowd of men would naturally be, is in a state of awful torture. Besides, the whole contrivance is nothing but a malicious trap to catch Jesus' feet and overthrow Him. They know how compassionately He has ever treated the fallen, pitying those whom others scorned, encouraging those whom others crushed, eating with sinners and letting a woman of the street bathe His feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair. Now we have caught Him, is their thought. If He shall say "let the poor woman go free," we will arraign Him for setting at naught the law of Moses. If He shall say "Go stone the guilty thing accord to the Mosaic law," we shall have Him belying His compassion and we will charge Him with invading the prerogative of the Roman Governor, who alone has authority to condemn persons to death.

Which of these horns of their cunningly devised dilemma does Jesus take? He takes neither one. He simply drops down on His knee, and, like one who hears not, sees not, heeds not, He writes with His finger on the ground. The accusers watch Him with gleeful looks, as if His downcast face and silent acting were a confession that He was trapped and could not escape. They proceed to urge their question. They lay their hands on His shoulders and insist on an answer, and an answer they suddenly get. Raising His holy head from the ground one moment, Jesus

utters a word which strikes them like an arrow from the throne of God. "The one among you who is without sin himself, let him first cast a stone at her."

Perhaps the woman shivers in expectation of that first stone. But it is never thrown. Everyone waits for someone else to lead. No one is willing to take the risk of having his past life exposed by the clairvoyance of Jesus. The older men feel a strong inclination to withdraw, and begin to edge their way out through the crowd. And the younger men, glancing at each other with cowed faces, slink out one after another. Jesus, who has stooped down again and is tracing letters on the ground, lets them all go out without looking up. The last one gone, He raises His head and turning His holy tender eye upon the woman asks, "Where are those thine accusers? Did no man cast a stone at thee?" "No one, Lord," is the reply. "Neither shall I. Go, repent, and sin no more."

This memorable story has been the subject of more discussion than almost any passage in the Gospel. It is wholly omitted from some ancient manuscripts and versions. Many eminent Fathers rejected it as dangerous in its teaching. I notice that the revisers of the New Testament have put brackets around it as if it were an unsafe spot which needed to be railed off. But though the critical evidence against it were much stronger than it is, its authenticity would defend itself. There are some passages in the Bible which we know are genuine and divine because no

mind of man could have conceived them or hand of man invented them. This is one of them. There is here an exhibition of divine feeling, divine penetration and divine dealing so far above man's power to manifest that it is evidently declared by its own super-human character to be a message from God and the penitent's gospel.

Coming now to the story itself, what a startling window is here opened into Jesus' inner nature and personal feeling. I shall never forget the emotion which I experienced when the meaning of Jesus' stooping down was first explained to me. I was reading a book, famous a few years ago, entitled "Ecce Homo." Why did Jesus stoop down to write on the ground? Why did He not stand and look them all full in the face? I had never asked myself this question distinctly. I thought He stooped down perhaps to show that he paid no attention to them. Professor Seeley said Jesus was ashamed, so ashamed that He instinctively stooped down to hide His blushing face. He said the foul scene fell on the chastity of His pure feeling so painfully that He had no eyes to look up. He could not meet the eye of the crowd, the eye of the accusers, least of all perhaps at that moment the eye of the woman. And in His burning suffering sensibility He stooped down to hide His crimsoned face and wrote on the ground. I felt the truth of the explanation the moment I read it. And what a disclosure it was to me of Jesus' inner nature and feeling! I was like a child for the first time he sees

his father in an agony of deep emotion. I saw my Saviour in a new and affecting aspect. My heart shook and I was moved to fall at His feet.

My friends, the expression which comes to my lips is, How little we know about this Saviour of ours yet! We know something about His words and works. We have apprehended a little of His outward life. But there is a whole sphere of His being which we have not yet entered, the sphere of His inward emotion, His pent-up sensibilities. There are passages of Jesus' life before which I am like a person looking into a dark room. Once He had a struggle with temptation in the wilderness, once He sighed, once He groaned in spirit, twice He wept, once He exclaimed, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say," once He fell down on His face on the ground in an agony so intense that discolored drops resembling blood exuded from His brow. These are moral mysteries, and mysteries they will remain until we see Him face to face. And yet these glimpses of Jesus' moral sensibility are given us because they are fraught with impressions important for us to receive.

We have then this fact to consider, that Jesus feels toward every evil of us men and women according to its nature. He loathes what is disgusting in us, hates what is cruel, grieves over what is wrong in us, is ashamed of what is low in us, shudders at what is polluting and awful in us. He gathers up into His own soul the representative acts of us all. He bears our sins, not merely their penalty, but the very feel-

ing and heartache of them. In a sense deeper than we ever read into the words, He is wounded by our transgressions and bruised by our iniquities. Every evil thing He touches burns into His sensitive spirit like a hot iron into an infant's hand. The trouble with us men is that we are so bronzed over with sin that we are never duly shocked by its baseness or hurt by its wrong. It takes purity to feel impurity, it takes honor to suffer shame, it takes sinlessness to recoil from defilement. And Jesus Christ is perfect sinlessness, perfect purity, perfect moral loveliness.

O when I think of Him going about in Judæa and Galilee with that divine heart of His, the most sensitive that ever beat in a human breast, because the most pure, when I think of Him bending over every one of us all day long in our varying acts and conditions of sin and shame, it seems to me that He must often suffer throes of painful sensibility of which we never think. Besides, Jesus Christ is love, and love is a capacity for suffering sensibility. For a Being of infinite purity to love, really to love men and women like us, is to bear a burden of inexpressible pain and sorrow. Why did the King of Israel cover His face with his hands and burst into that agony of woe, "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"? Why did that mother fall down the other day and die of a broken heart at the news of her daughter's disgrace? Love did it, love contemplating the sin and woe of its object. And Jesus Christ is infinite love, love of God,

love of man in one, pouring itself out on sinful woeful objects. Do you wonder that He sighs and groans and weeps and stoops down to hide His averted face?

Here I pause to ask a question. I ask you, I ask myself, have we any of this suffering sensitiveness to evil? Have we even a little of the Master's sense of shrinking shame in the presence of impurity, indelicacy and ribaldry? We may easily know, we cannot help knowing. There are novelists and playwrights who are continually doing what these Pharisees were engaged in, dragging some unseemly sight into the public gaze and making their pages purveyors for lickerish mouths and salacious lips. If we have Jesus' holy sensitiveness to what is gross and sensual there will be entertainments which we shall not be able to attend without stooping down and writing on the ground. There will be books which we cannot read and look up into any pure eye, least of all the divine. There will be conversations which we shall not be able to participate in without faces burning and blushing with pain.

Another feature of this story which impresses me is the way in which Jesus deals with the sinner. Look at these robed and sanctimonious citizens haling a trembling woman to judgment. Not one of them is exempt from some form of the same sin which she has committed. Not one of them but ought to be on his knees before a merciful God seeking forgiveness for his own iniquities. Besides, it is their own sister, their own flesh and blood. Not one of them but

ought to be touched with sympathy for her and kindled with desire for her restoration. But look at them. They have less feeling than the stones they are standing upon. They drag her into the presence of infinite Purity and propose stoning her to death, a punishment that has been obsolete for ages. They go over the whole shameful recital and hold her up for public inspection like a filthy garment. They make a tableau of her and exploit her sin for a demonstration in casuistry in order to entrap the world's Redeemer. "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; and let me not fall into the hand of man," said David. It is amazing how hard and pitiless sinners can be upon sinners. Why, if the people of this city were to be judged by one another I doubt if one would escape condemnation.

Thank heaven there is One who pities, One who feels the sin of an unchaste woman as if she were His own sister, One whose prompting is not to condemn but to save, One whose verdict upon her, upon you and me if we will hear it, is, as George Matheson words it, "You are black but I send you toward the sun. You are guilty but I bury your yesterday. You are unworthy to live but you shall live to be worthy. I condemn you and I absolve you. I blame your past and I wipe it out forever. You will be judged by deeds to come, not by departed days. Go and sin no more."

Here I pause again to ask, have you and I any of this sympathy and hope for the fallen? How is it

when a person among us is suspected of going astray? Do people, good Christian people, lock the matter right up in their own breasts and study how to recover the erring one? Or do they oftener than not go out among the neighbors with the story and roll it under their tongues as a sweet morsel and dissect it like cold-blooded anatomists and watch the suspected one for new evidences of frailty? Pity it is that there should be so little real sheltering protecting love among people whose sins all need covering. Pity that it should be so easy in this dark world for the standing to fall and so hard for the fallen to rise.

And we have the keys of the kingdom of heaven. We have it in our power by our looks and words and acts of recognition and encouragement to loose those who are bound from their condemnation and despair. And we have it in our power by our averted looks and hard condemning thoughts to bind those who have gone wrong with chains ten times stronger than their own sins. All about us are persons whom we are setting free by imparting to them our conviction that there is forgiveness for them to seek, a new life for them to live and a pure heaven for them to gain. Or else about us are persons whom we are crowding down from one depth of sin and despair to another by making them feel that there is no chance for the like of them, no present release, no future possibilities.

Some persons have been tempted to read this story out of the Gospel because they say the sinning woman

is let off so easily. They think her sin ought to have been condemned in round terms and she ought to have been reminded of what she deserved even though her accusers could throw no stones against her. I cannot think that such persons have ever really read the story and understood how the woman is let off. No man or woman who has ever stood where this woman stood, after her accusers were gone, alone with Jesus, will imagine that she was let off without a pricked conscience and penitent heart. Left alone with Jesus! So long as the Pharisees are around charging and condemning her I seem to hear her saying to herself, "They are as bad, they are as bad." But when she is alone face to face with stainless Purity how her attitude changes! She ceases at once measuring herself by others. She sees herself in the light of God. It is Judgment Day for her. O how the waves of her past guilt and shame rise over her submerged soul! How she longs for her lost purity! Then to her, all convicted of sin and humbled in the dust for her transgression, Jesus speaks His sin-absolving, hope-giving word, "Go, be free, and sin no more." What became of the woman we do not know, but we may be sure that to her dying day she never remembered without gratitude and tears the morning when she stood alone with Jesus in the courts of the Lord.

I will mention one other feature of this interesting story, and that is the lesson of humility and self-examination which it reads to all of us who are seeking to reform others and purify society. Perhaps

these Pharisees thought they were doing society a service by dragging this woman before Jesus, but they soon learned there was little real difference between themselves and their prisoner, and that a primary service to society for them to perform lay in their own hearts and lives. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." My friends, if we feel that we are standing on a platform of superiority over others and are entitled to approach the unfortunate in the "I am better than thou" spirit, then we are become the Pharisees and lie under the challenge, "He that is without sin among you." I do not think that any person has any right or power to do anything for the most degraded man or woman except in a spirit of love and lowliness. In dealing with a drunkard for example, you and I have no right to look down upon him and lay the lash of condemnation upon his sin as if we were his moral superiors. Suppose you and I never have fallen victims to intemperance. Suppose we have always been surrounded by such elevating conditions in life that the temptation to drink has never really assailed us. But have we not inwardly our own guilt and iniquity great as this, and do we know where we should be now outwardly if we had lived in the environment in which many are living and which is a constant force of gravity to drag them down?

And who is responsible for the debasing environment? Whose is the guilt of creating and upholding social conditions which as good as compel the poor to

be not only poor but dissolute, criminal and besotted? Has God made this mire in which men and women are living and bidden them wallow and flounder in it? No, my friends, God never made it. *We* have done it. Know it well, *we* are guilty. Society is guilty. The rich are responsible for the sins of the poor. The respectable are responsible for the sins of those whose respect is gone. You and I are sharers in the downfall of men and women in this city. And not until we have improved the conditions of the poor and criminal classes, not until we have placed within their reach the physical advantages and rational enjoyments which have saved us from degradation, can we cast a single stone in the sight of Jesus Christ at any thief or drunkard or harlot.

I rejoice that thoughtful men and women both in the Church and out of it are beginning to realize this. We are beginning to grasp the fact that human lives cannot be isolated from one another, but all are bound up in the human race. We are all partners without our choice in each other's health and sickness, in each other's joy and sorrow, in each other's wisdom and folly, in each other's righteousness and wickedness. Other men are making life blessed or sad for us. We are making life blessed or sad for others. There is a solidarity of the human race. The highest and the lowest, the richest and the poorest, the best and the worst are bound together in an inseparable partnership. We are keepers of one another.

Brethren, I invite you to enter this larger relation-

ship and closer fellowship with humanity. I invite you to walk in the light of this higher vision. I invite you to welcome this nobler destiny and richer partnership with your brother men and Elder Brother Christ. For those who will not do this, who will only seek their own things in their own selfish way, there is a sure condemnation. To those who see the face of truth and have her beauty revealed to them she becomes a judge that

“Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the right—

And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.”

CONTENTMENT.

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Philippians 4: 11.

Was the lesson worth the learning? Is contentment always so desirable a thing? Ought one to be content in whatever state he is? Is it so that heights are climbed and garlands plucked? One of Charles Kingsley's best utterances was in praise of discontent. When our Lord said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst,” He made discontent a beatitude. Full of the cries of a sublime discontent are David's Psalms, St. Paul's Epistles, St. Augustine's Confessions, the lives and writings of all great divine souls. Discontent is the sense of want, the spur of advancement, the soul of aspiration, the distinguishing mark of a lofty and growing spirit. Said Robert Hall, “I am constantly tormented with a desire to preach better sermons than I can.” “And because he was so tormented,” remarks a modern author, “he preached better sermons than any man alive.”

Give a Guinea negro plenty of sunshine to lie in

Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, 1883 and 1884; also in these churches: Central Presbyterian, Rochester, 1884; Brick Presbyterian, Rochester, 1885; Presbyterian, Rye, N. Y., 1885; Central Presbyterian, Denver, 1888 and 1898; Second Presbyterian, Scranton, 1889; Presbyterian, Owego, N. Y., 1891; New York Avenue Presbyterian, Washington, D. C., 1895; Binghamton State Hospital for the Insane, 1895; First Presbyterian, Buffalo, 1896; Central Presbyterian, Rochester, 1896; Immanuel Presbyterian, Milwaukee, 1897; First Presbyterian, Englewood, N. J., 1898; First Presbyterian, Milwaukee, 1898; First Presbyterian, Binghamton, 1898; Central Presbyterian, Denver, 1898.

and plenty of pineapple to eat, and you have a picture of contentment, grinning, grunting contentment. But where were our civilization, our sciences, our progress, our works of improvement and advancement, if men and women were just as willing to lie in nakedness and dirt as in independence and beautiful conditions? It is perfectly certain that every one of us ought to be deeply and increasingly discontented with himself, with his past attainments, with his present efforts and accomplishments. He ought to set his heart with urgent unappeased desire upon doing better work than he does and upon being a better man than he is. Of that kind of discontent no one ever had too much, and no one ever had more than the eager aspiring spirit who penned the text, whose image, whose characteristic attitude, was that of a runner, eye and hand flung forward, forgetting the things that were behind, reaching forth unto the things that were before.

Is there no such thing then as true content? Is there no such blessing as the tranquil mind? I think there is. "Am I discontented with myself or with things which are not myself?" asked Epictetus. A very significant question, though it came from the lips of a heathen slave. To be well satisfied with themselves, yet full of all dissatisfactions and complaints because things outside of them are not to their liking, this is the content and discontent of a great many people. To have ceased to be greatly troubled about things outside of him because he was struggling

for good things inside and striving to do more of God's will and grow a better man day by day, this was the content and discontent of St. Paul.

We must not think that the mere absence of desires constitutes contentment. "If you would have a contented mind," said the old philosopher, "cut your desires down to the measure of your supplies." An impossible rule in the first place, and in the next productive of nothing but a counterfeit contentment. Diogenes in his tub was a stubborn man and a cynical man, but a contented man he never was. The hermit who reduces his wants to a cell in the ground and a little bread and water to dull the edge of his appetite has a semblance of contentment, but it is no more like the high shining serenity of mind which St. Paul possessed than high noon is like starless night. The fact is there can be no real contentment except there be the possibility of its opposite, except there be strong desires, urgent wants, and the hope of satisfying them when God shall see fit to open the way. To be happy in our present position whatever it be, and yet ready and thankful to rise out of it into a higher and better, to be able to live in sweet peace of mind in a small house, with a narrow income, and yet prefer to live in a larger one and have a comfortable support, to wait patiently when waiting is God's will and to enjoy heartily when enjoyment is given, to carry the full cup with a steady hand and to accept the bitter one with a tranquil spirit, in short, not to lay too great stress upon secular advantages one way

or the other, but to be above them and keep them hanging quite loose about us, this I think is the problem of true contentment.

And the solution of it is certainly not to eradicate the desires, not to petrify the soul into a state of insensibility, but rather to have something within the soul itself so much higher and more precious than anything without that life's evils shall no longer seem unendurable or its goods indispensable. You have seen a young man going into business, his heart kindled with enthusiasm, his eye fixed upon the summit of his chosen occupation. How content he was to miss many of the pleasures in which he formerly delighted, because of other stronger attractions which had entered into him. The artist, the poet, the scholar are content to be poor in money values, because conscious of being rich in the higher values of creative power and ideal beauty.

But the word itself contains its own solution. The exact sense of the Greek word *autarkes* is self-sufficing, self-supporting, independent. Thucydides uses it to describe a city which subsists on its own resources and does not require to import anything. Like our own word *contented*, which properly means *contained*, it denotes a mind which does not overflow and run about for its happiness, but finds a living fountain of satisfying good ever open at its door and springing up at its feet. The lake which is supplied from its own depths has a contented face. The stars which burn with an inward illumination are images

of fathomless content. God is absolute contentment, because his is a nature absolutely self-sufficing. So the truly contented soul is one who finds his own inner being self-sufficing still, whatever his outward conditions, and is therefore independent of outward conditions, independent of other persons, independent of all save God Himself.

I know some of us are incredulous about this. We cannot recognize the truth that contentment is essentially an inward thing. We think circumstances make the difference. We complain of our lot. We charge our restless repining dissatisfied feelings to our external conditions and to the treatment we receive at the hand of others. We feel confident that if some fortune were to raise us up to eminence and surround us with affluence, full streams of contentment would flow in upon us from every side. But we know not what we ask. Our wishes realized would only increase the troubles they are expected to remove. Depend upon it, we shall never heal the open sore of the heart's discontent until we come back to the heart itself and change somewhat there. A weak peevish irritable complaining soul can no more find contentment by improving his outward condition than a man in a fever can find a cool place by turning from side to side in his bed. But reduce the temperature and any side will be cool enough. Full of profound truth though mingled with sadness was the confession of poor Oliver Goldsmith,

“Vain, very vain, my search to find
The bliss which only centres in the mind.”

True interior contentment, need I say it, is one of the highest, richest acquisitions which any one of us can possibly make. The old philosophers and poets had a good appreciation of its lower values and often dwelt upon them. “A contented mind is the greatest and surest riches,” says Cicero. It is the true answer to the soul’s great search for happiness, says Horace; though elsewhere he indicates the difficulty of coming to it in the question, “How happens it, Maecenas, that nobody lives contented in the lot assigned to him by God?” “God hath appointed one remedy,” says another, “for all the evils in the world, a contented spirit.”

Still higher considerations recommend it to us to whom the mystery of the divine life has been given. Contentment is the primary substance of spirituality, the very atmosphere in which holiness is realized. Pleasing to God, helpful to others, and an unspeakable treasure to its possessor is a mind centered in deep sweet measureless content. He who possesses true interior contentment is fortified in an impregnable castle, and that castle is his own soul. What can fortune or misfortune, success or failure, the world’s favors or frowns do to a man whose good things are all inside of his own soul? Whatever man may think about him or do to him, the whole universe is his. We are told how Jean Paul Richter, the German poet, was excluded from the aristocratic circle of the

little town of Hof. It seems he did not belong to their set. They blackballed him. Whereupon, remarks Carlyle, "As he could not be admitted to the West End of Hof, he was obliged to take up his quarters at the West End of the universe, where indeed he had a splendid reception."

But now how to have true inward contentment; how to be free from vague longings, repining hours, complaining moods, how to have what one calls the temporal heaven of a contented mind, the best evidence that we are making sure progress toward the infinite eternal heaven at God's right hand? The text gives us a hint, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He did not inherit it by nature, he learned it. It was not given him at conversion, he learned it afterwards. God taught it to him as He teaches docile souls so much of their best wisdom, in the school of life and experience. Vain, very vain and presumptuous, my brother, would it be for me to attempt to teach you or myself the lesson of contentment. Only God can teach the lesson. But we can study, if we will, the ways by which He is teaching it and perhaps point out some of the helps for its speedier learning.

One of these helps which has been of use to others is to distinguish more thoughtfully than we do between the real and the adventitious blessings of life. When one thinks upon it, the really great blessings of existence are not so unevenly distributed after all. What are God's great gifts? Life, health, sleep, suit-

able food and clothing, knowledge, work, friendship, a good conscience and the grace of Jesus Christ. Well, what class or rank in society has any monopoly of these things? Are they not bestowed like the air and sunlight, like the beauties of nature and the blessings of the gospel, upon high and low, rich and poor alike? And yet these universal gifts are the great things, the only essential elements of either greatness, goodness, or happiness.

True, there are other things. There are rich incomes, but what makes a noble life, high enthusiasm or ten thousand a year? There are palatial residences, but what makes a home, love or fine parlors? There are splendid equipages, but what makes a journey, an intelligent eye or a luxurious carriage? There is elegant apparel, but what makes a lady, costly dress or a beautiful soul? "And having food and raiment," says the apostle, "let us therewith be content." It is an enforcement of the truth upon which we are dwelling, the truth that the common gifts of life are the great ones, the truth that contentment is not hidden in the clouds or secreted in the depths of the sea, but like the manna in the camp of the Israelites falls from heaven right about us in the blessings of every day. The healthful countenance, the sunny spirit, the warm grasp of love, the pleasures of work, of nature and of books, the consciousness of doing good and the hopes of heaven, he who has these things has the fresh and perennial springs of content. And he who has them and yet

chooses to turn away from them and sit down on his little bundle of thorns is fit to bear the moping owl company, who with sunshine all around him complains that there is nothing to see or to enjoy.

Another admirable help to contentment is found in the Apostle's precept, "Be content with such things as you have;" the true force of which is, set a just valuation upon the things which you have and do not be always looking upon and magnifying things which others have and you have not. It is an infirmity to which the noblest minds are subject to fix the eye upon things which they have not and estimate their worth by the distance of their removal. We overvalue the things we desire and undervalue the things we possess. While we have an object in pursuit we see nothing but its attractions, when we have it in possession we are apt to see little but its defects. But it is the part of a thoughtful Christian to rise superior to these illusions of the mind and be much taken up with the things God has given us; to consider how valuable they are to us, how precious, how comforting, how much worse off we would be without them, and how many persons long for just what we have and would be glad with all their hearts to exchange for our possessions the very things which we have envied them. Ah, friends, if we would but take our eyes and hearts off the things we have not, and let gratitude count up the blessings we have and love taste the goodness we have and happiness enjoy the comforts we have, we should oftener than we do speak

to one another that old beautiful word which in this restless age falls upon the ear like a voice out of another world, "Because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough."

Still another help to contentment is to compare what we have with what we deserve. We are fond of drawing comparisons, but not of this kind. We run over in our thoughts our neighbors, our richer neighbors not our poorer ones, and are filled with envy and discontent at seeing others no better than ourselves having so much more than we have of the world's wealth, honor, ease, reputation. But how much humbler as well as happier we would be if instead of looking sidewise at our neighbors and finding cause of offense in God's dealings with them, we were in the habit of musing over God's good providences toward ourselves and finding in them, as Jacob did, cause for wonder, love and praise. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant."

Of all that any one of us is enjoying at this moment what he has deserved? Has he deserved life, or health, or strength, or reason, or happiness? Has he put God under the slightest obligation to give him the pleasures of home, relatives, friends, education, the Bible, the Church? Or is each and every one of these things a pure gratuity undeservedly given and day by day continued to him by God's mercy? Ah, if we would only think what that means which the prophet Jeremiah says we should never again be dis-

contented. "It is of the Lord's mercies—." What? That we have so many things to enjoy? No, not that. That we are kept from so much misery? No. That we are not beaten with many stripes? No. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

But after all, the great stay of the contented spirit must ever be its faith, its trust in the Almighty. "Be content with present things," says the Apostle, "for he hath said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." By what can a person who really holds that assurance from a faithful omnipotent creator ever be disquieted? If God be for him what can be against him? Life passes. I know it as well as you. Riches fly, popularity wanes, friends die, the world changes. But One is constant. One is true. One changes not. One can do all things for us. Where we are He has placed us. What we have He has given us. Whither we go He leads us. He strengthens and upholds us by day and by night. He keeps guard and thinks upon us. O, it is in such hours as we have been thinking upon God and have heard coming down through the depth of our souls His whispered voice, "My child, I have loved you," that all the fears and anxieties and perils that often come thick about this mortal life have vanished away and we have looked up in strange wonder and said, "Lord, it is enough, I am content."

But if faith in God brings occasional tides of content, acquaintance with Him and service of Him in Jesus Christ brings its steady continuous flow. The

saintly painter, Angelico, traced his glowing conceptions upon the cells of San Marco, and those who visit Florence are arrested and thrilled by the purity of his dreams. But he who has stood before the Cross, he who has seen the face of Jesus Christ, has seen a vision of such matchless purity and penetrating power as throws the pictured dreams of Angelico into dim and shadowy faintness. He has seen in one soul-subduing sight the wondrous love of God and the wondrous sacredness of man. O brother, sister, it seems to me that I perceive now where St. Paul learned the lesson of contentment. It began to spring up within him in his first vision of the Crucified on that summer noonday before the ancient city of Damascus. Henceforth his life was changed. One Vision illuminated the whole pathway of life. One Face transfigured all. One purpose, one allegiance, one devotion seized him, to impress that Glory upon a sinning, sorrowing world, to carry out the objects of that Life and fill the earth with the love and loveliness of that Vision. His was the contentment of a soul lost like his Master's in self-sacrifice and consecration.

O, to think that there are men and women in this world, perchance on this sanctuary floor, who in no sense love and serve Jesus Christ, this is to waken up to the truth that there are men and women who have no deep interior contentment because no deep interior love and devotion. It is to waken up to the fact that there are men and women surrounded by

all the comfort that life can offer, health, fortune, friends, and yet petty, peevish, irritable, fretted by the slightest annoyance, simply because their feelings and energies are all pent up in themselves, all boiling in their own bosoms, not drawn out in any worthy effort, not absorbed in any supreme love.

“Some murmur,” says the poet,

“If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God’s good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.”

ON TAKING A REST.

“Rest in the Lord.” Psalm 37: 7.

The golden midsummer days are upon us. The ardent sun overflows earth and sky with heat and splendor. The hills and valleys stand clothed in richest verdure. The airs are drowsy, the clouds are dreamy, the woods are full of mystery, the sunsets are vistas of glory. It is the season of fervors and odors, the season of long days and full harmonies, above all the season of deep tranquilities and “the old immortal peace that comes with summer tide.” The tone of spring is life and energy, the tone of autumn is pensiveness and decay, the tone of winter is fierceness and storm, but restfulness and repose is the tone of summer. The winds are light and gentle, the streams flow with a lulling music, the notes of the birds are soft and liquid, the groves are still and soothing, the flocks of clouds above, like the flocks below, congregate slowly. All things seem to exist in a tideless expansion of peace, an image of that above.

“If here on earth such blessed peace may be,
Though known so transiently,
How deep the peace of God that folds eternity!
There also happy souls in summer’s glow
Are led where waters flow,
And find the new born earth like earth of long ago.”

Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, 1904.

The message from this pulpit is usually a gospel of work or a gospel of grace. It is rarely, perhaps too rarely, a gospel of rest. Perhaps it would be better if our congregations, which are always gathered to hear what they can do for God, were oftener called to rest in what God has done for them and in God Himself. At any rate here at the close of a year of hastening months and increasing duties, when nature is breathing restful influences all around, I feel the call to rest and am come to you this morning with a plea for summer blessing.

Beyond doubt work is the great purpose of life and a chief source of human happiness. Without anything to do in it, this world would be a miserable place. Life unoccupied, life listless, purposeless, dawdled away in perpetual idleness, would be a dreadful burden. "My happiest days," said a wise man, "have been those in which I had most work to do with sufficient health and strength to do it." We do not work in order to rest; we rest in order to work. If we do put rest before us as the end we never gain it, or if we do we are never happy in its possession. Work is the end, rest is the means. Work is the privilege, rest is the necessity. Rest is a necessity in this life at least. In another world we believe that work itself will be restful and recuperative without any effect of weariness or feeling of exhaustion. We read of the blessed ones above that they do Him service, they serve Him day and night in His temple. But here for every one of us rest is a necessity. No

one has such resources of strength that he does not need from time to time a new baptism of freshness and vigor.

It is an inexorable law of nature that periods of intensity must be followed by periods of relaxation, working hours by hours of sleep, long applications of work by intervals of rest. The bow cannot always be kept bent. The horse cannot be driven at the top of his speed all day long. Too frequent and too solemn are the warnings given us that the laws of nature cannot be disregarded with impunity, and that the overdriven must come to a standstill. Never perhaps in the history of the world has the necessity of rest been so imperative as now. "All things are full of labor," said Solomon in his day. What he would say if he were living now, when men have what is called the bicycle eye, the automobile face, and the twentieth century eagerness and strenuousness, I do not know. Life in too many instances is a run, a rush, and a wreck. While I am speaking you have before your minds some case of a noble life brought to a sudden and untimely end by neglecting the necessity of rest, some sad memory of a brilliant intellect and eager heart and intense nature strained until the break came, never to be repaired on earth, and the work which with greater moderation might have gone on a long time was arrested in the height of its progress.

But rest is not only a physical necessity. It is an intellectual and moral reinforcement. The body and

mind are so intimately wedded that whatever invigorates the one gives new force to the other. It is wonderful how much is gained by both body and mind in sleep. He who sleeps is born anew. No hard thinker but knows how the mind that drags heavily at night often issues from the womb of the morning a new creature. We have a habit of saying in regard to an important question or decision, "I will sleep over it and let you know in the morning." There is more in that than seems. It is not merely more time that is gained but more light, more vision. During the rest of the night the confusions of the brain rearrange themselves, its perplexities clear up, its spent energies flow back and gather in, and the man emerges in the morning into a more lucid state and considers the question from a truer point of view. How often difficulties of thought and obstacles of expression insuperable at night yield readily to a few moments' application in the morning every one knows.

This is even more true of those longer periods of rest which give the mind more full restoration. It is a mistake to think that the mind receives nothing except when engaged in deliberate effort. There is an unconscious cerebration, an involuntary secretion of vital forces and dewy freshness in times when the yoke is lifted off the neck and the spirit unbends at liberty, that is among the most valuable of the mind's acquisitions. Many are the hard-worked business men who are now leaving their stores and counting rooms behind them, many are the weary professional

men and women who are leaving their clients, patients, schools and churches behind them, with dark discouraged feelings, who will come again from their quiet resting places by and by with bright countenances and fresh invigorations, prepared for higher service and heavier burdens.

But rest is not only a physical necessity and an intellectual reinforcement. It is a part of religion. It often happens that a person finds himself sinking down into states of impatience, irritableness, despondency and irresolution from nothing else but the want of rest. Whenever I speak on this subject I am made to think of that tired out man in the old Bible story—that man of unflinching courage, iron purpose, and nerve of steel, lying under the juniper tree, his arms relaxed, his head bowed forward between his knees, his face the picture of despair and himself asking for death as the only exit from his woe and wretchedness. “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” A most false and unworthy state of mind for a man to be in no doubt, especially a prophet of the Lord who had been divinely honored as he had. You are ready to say, perhaps, that his most fitting exercise is penitence and prayer. Not so thought He who understood His servant’s case and knew what was necessary to restore him. He knew that the spiritual bow had been bent too long already. Once, twice did the angel of the Lord come with refreshing food and bend over the poor tired spirit, saying,

“Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee,” and then when he had eaten give him back again into the arms of nature’s sweet restorer, deep sleep.

We are apt to think that religion should always be a struggle, that religious services should always brace the will, stimulate the energies, arouse the conscience and impel the soul, but it is not so. That we should forget the things that are behind and reach forth unto the things that are before and press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling I do most earnestly believe. But that we should be *always* doing this, always striving to broaden our knowledge, always laboring to deepen our penitence, always gazing at the heights of purity we have not yet reached, always thinking on the millions whom the Gospel has not yet blessed, I do not believe. St. Paul was not always doing this. There are whole epistles of his in which his mind is chiefly taken up in resting and rejoicing in what God has done already. God has done great things already, and it is a poor shallow religion that does not sometimes pause and rest in what God is and what he has done for us sinners. The joy of the Lord is our strength, and we never can have enduring vigor and deep peace unless we sometimes feed our souls upon the vision of God’s everlasting love and rest in the hope of His eternal glory.

Approaching the subject from another point of view, I should like to speak a few words upon the way

in which rest is to be obtained. There are four great powers of rest, all close at hand and within the reach of every one of us, nature, companionship, the Sunday, and God. First, nature. God has given the visible heavens and earth a mysterious power to heal the body, calm the mind and soothe the spirit. Nature is a trained nurse and full of sympathies as a woman's heart. Her blithe sunlit air is a cordial beyond the power of any apothecary to mingle. Her woods are high places full of presences at once silent and communicative. Her mornings and evenings are apocalyptic visions. Her hills, rivers, horizons, sunlight and shadow, cloud and rainbow, moon-rise and star-light, are enchantments that lift off not only the weight of care but the weariness of age and give back our youth. And it need not be nature in the Rocky Mountains or nature around the Mediterranean Sea to do this. Many persons think that to have rest they must have a change of scene. They think that rest comes from flight and must be pursued. They are like the psalmist who in one of his depressed moods cries out, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." But rest is not obtained in that way. There are just as many tired, restless, unhappy men and women hurrying through Europe at this moment as are staying here at home. You need not journey to snowy mountain ranges or stand on the shore of the deep blue sea to enjoy a perfect exhilaration. You cannot retreat for one happy hour into one of the hills

that compass this city without being surrounded from first to last by a thousand objects of beauty and joy fresh from the hand of God. You cannot look up into the sky without a vision almost human in its expressions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its majesty. Yesterday brought me a message from a friend floating in a gondola near the Rialto beneath the moonlight of Venice, with the air all music and the scene faerie. As I laid down the message and looked through my window into the blue depths of the sky, I saw floating there a faerie pageant of cloudland, purer and lovelier than the famed bride of the sea ever appeared.

Ah, friends, let not vain longings for that which you have not rob you of the full enjoyment of what God has so freely given you. Seize every opportunity in these summer days of communing with nature here at home. Be much out of doors. Go as often as you can into the woods, and when you go throw open your whole natures to the influences around you. If possible break away from the routine of your ordinary occupation, though it be only for a week or two. Leave care and anxiety behind and live that one week in the solid enjoyment of rest. To some perhaps a visit to a great city would be a real rest because it would take them out of their own thoughts and troubles more effectually than a quiet place in the country. The form and place in which the rest is taken must depend upon the inclination and resources of him who takes it. But whether it be in the city,

among the mountains or by the sea, it will give us new and happier views of life and bring us nearer to the kingdom of God to go apart and rest awhile. Someone has said that nature in summer is just as much a divine institution in aid of our spiritual nature as is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or the ordinance of social worship, only that for the most part we fail to see it with faith and devoutness.

There is a second power of rest, companionship. People think they enjoy places and things. What they really enjoy is persons. If you were condemned to spend your life in the most beautiful spot in the Alps or the Italian Lakes and to spend it there alone, it would soon become drearier to you than a desert. If you were appointed to live in a gorgeous palace where no human face was ever seen, where no footstep but your own was ever heard in its richly furnished rooms, you would soon long to share a hut with a friend. The human soul cannot rest in things. It demands the interchange of thoughts, feelings, sympathies. It demands companionship. "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest," was spoken by God to Moses, but the profound truth of it, that in a loving Presence is rest, we have all felt. It is good to take a sympathizing companion into our days of rest. Indeed this is what real inward rest is, the ascendancy of a strong affection. Love and trust are the great rest-giving powers, even as inquiry and doubt are the fountains of unrest. A satisfied heart is always a rest.

There is a companionship of books as well as of living persons. Books, good books, are friends that speak to us, walk with us, comfort us, show us their hearts and allow us to leave them at any moment without being offended. It may easily be that a book shall be more communicative of tranquility and rest than a living person because the element of restlessness and rancour is eliminated, and it imparts only light and sympathy. Ruskin classified all books as books for the hour and books for all time. It is well to take into our hours of rest one of each class, a book that is a cordial and a book that is a tonic, a sweet, wholesome book of the hour and a great immortal book, and alternate them.

Thirdly, the Sunday, the weekly rest day, is a great power and precious gift of rest. God has caused a deep sleep to fall upon the life of man every seventh day, and out of that sleep as out of a cradle He causes His children to come forth rested, quieted, pacified. We cannot be too thankful for the Sabbath Day, "God's selected gift of time," as it has been called, "Mount of clearest vision, land of purest air, spot nearest heaven's gate." What a pity that to many people the Sunday is hardly different from a mere holiday! What a pity that to some instead of being the best of all the days it is the worst; a day of dissipation and exhaustion instead of a day of joy and invigoration!

I have sometimes heard people speak as if the strict Sabbath rest which prevailed in New England fifty

years ago must have made the day a bondage and a burden, especially to children and young people. My experience does not confirm that opinion. Sunday was never a dreaded day in my childhood. It was, however, a day strangely unlike other days. It was a divinely still and peaceful day, a day, as it were, out of another world, out of the far summer sky, a day on which Heaven bent closer over the earth and the ladder of vision given to the Hebrew boy lying on the desert with a stone for his pillow was given to the New England boy in his pasture. I cannot but feel that our modern life would be sweeter and happier with that strange still day in the midst of it. Why is it that so many men and women who are sighing for rest and who need rest are not permitted to realize it? Why is it that so many persons are compelled to live in a state of chronic locomotion? Even when they go away for the purpose of rest they cannot rest. They must be always moving on, always traveling to the next place, usually starting Sunday morning, ever urging forward, ever forced along, ever anxious and excited, never tranquil, never peaceful. They asked in Cairo what sin the people of American had committed that they had always to be traveling and were never permitted to rest anywhere. Is the answer a broken commandment and an unhallowed Sunday?

Finally, dear friends, there is one great original source of all the rest in the world—God. All the powers of rest we have been trying to describe, nature,

companionship, books, the Sunday, are just streams of which He is the fountain. In Him alone, in Him forever is perfect rest. What that rest is we know not yet. The stillest summer evening that ever shed its sweet peace around cannot tell us of the peace of God that passeth all understanding. The most blissful Sunday that ever lifted a rapt worshipper's soul on high cannot bring us within sight of the everlasting serenities of the rest that remaineth for the people of God. It is rest for all trouble and danger without and for all sin and fear within. It is the rest of every faculty of the soul completed, every longing fulfilled, every desire satisfied. It is the rest, the unspeakable rapture of union with God. O my brother, my sister, this is the rest which you need, which I need, which every human soul needs, the rest of the love of God.

And He is calling us to it. He is stretching out His hands to us this morning. He is looking upon our sin and restlessness with tender compassion. He is opening His heart to us as earnestly, as lovingly as ever before. He is longing to have us all forgiven, all redeemed, all saved from sin and weariness and death and welcomed home to everlasting rest in Heaven. I will close with His words, grandest, kingliest, sweetest, best ever spoken in this lost world, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

THE SCOPE AND OUTLOOK OF LIFE.

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2nd Corinthians 4: 18.

Is this a possible thing to do? And if possible is it profitable or praiseworthy for a man to shut his eye to things revealed about him in order to fix his attention upon hidden things above him? Is it so that men are awake and alert to discern the signs of the times and do their work in the world? Has God made this world and made it so conspicuous just to be looked away from? Has God made the human eye and made it so keen and penetrating just to be disused? There is a great deal of pulpit talk about looking away from the things of time to the things of eternity that is about the dullest, dismallest speech ever inflicted upon the human ear, and St. Paul is not responsible for it.

There are two kinds of looking. There is a looking which is temporary observing and there is a looking which is a fixed gaze upon a goal. There is a looking that observes facts, notes characteristics, recognizes relations, takes account of means and ends and sees how things can be accomplished. And there

is a looking which the Psalmist expresses when he says, "I have set the Lord always before me."

Every great soul—and every soul is great—has a double vision, a near-by look which takes in passing facts, experiences, opportunities, and a far-away look which terminates upon some invisible aim, some ideal eternal issue. Darwin was always observing facts about him and at the same time always setting before him that great invisible law of evolution. Napoleon had his eyes wide open to events and movements around him, but the pillar of cloud that went before him was his vision of universal empire.

Now when St. Paul says "we look not at the things that are seen," he does not mean that he pays no attention to things around him. No man ever had a quicker eye to take in the existing situation than he who spoke to the mob on the stairs of the castle of Antonia, defended himself before Festus and Agrippa, and assumed the management of affairs on the wreck of the foundered Alexandrian ship. It is the other kind of looking which the Apostle has in mind, the fixed gaze, the far-away vision, the shining goal. He means that he is journeying through this world under a light and glory that shines from above. God and eternity are always before him. His inspiration, his governing motive, his guiding star, are above, not beneath. He toils and endures as seeing Him who is invisible.

Our subject is the true scope and outlook of life. "We look not at the things which are seen but at the

things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Time and eternity, the seen and the unseen, the things of this passing world and the majesties of the eternal world to come, these are the things which the Apostle in stately solemn phrase sets over against each other to point out the soul's free outlook. In both of these we are all profoundly interested. We are bound to be interested in this visible world in which we are living and acting, making fortunes or losing them. And there are moments when the eternal country of which we are soon to make trial looms up with tremendous reality and overwhelming interest. In a recent illness my first feeling and experience was this great contrast of St. Paul's. The eternal realities yonder rose above the temporal here like majesties over phantoms and pushed them out of sight. I sat for days where the highest building of this city was in process of erection before my eyes, and it seemed as insignificant to me as a child's play house. I would not have stretched out my hand if I could for the offered deed of it. The whole material city faded into worthlessness. I was like a man among shadows with a world of living grandeur ready to open before him.

Brethren, we are heirs of two worlds. We are standing for the time in one creation, while another and grander is steadily bearing down upon us like gigantic headlands in a misty dawn. Well now, what are we looking at? What are we really and finally fixing our eyes

upon? What are we setting before us as the true scope and ultimate object of our vision, the transient gains and pleasures of this ephemeral scene or the august and holy presence of God and our eternal home? It makes all the difference what we are looking at. The eye is the watch tower of the soul. I want you this morning to see how true this is. I want you to see how much the direction of a man's gaze has to do with determining his present life and future destiny.

Consider in the first place how it affects our conception of this world and our estimate of things about us to see them all in their relation to God and eternity. You know how it changes the appearance of some stores on Court Street to see a twelve story building behind them. You know perhaps how a village in Switzerland looks against the background of a great white Alp. The streets lose their breadth. The buildings have no height. The spaces are contracted, the elevations are flattened, and the whole village has the appearance of a toy-like erection. So with this world in the eyes of one who sees the heavens opened. Wealth, rank, honor, the prizes of ambition and rewards of public applause seem very important to one who sees them by themselves. But seen against the great white background of the almighty and eternal, how the pride and bravery of this transitory world dwindle! One view of the glory of Jesus Christ above his head on the wayside to Damascus reversed instantly and completely Paul's estimate of this whole world. I must see God in the background to get a

correct view of things in the foreground. I am easily deceived. Near pleasures, immediate enjoyments, present gains get an exaggerated importance from my nearsightedness. What I need is an eternal background whose revealing light shall correct my view, rectify my judgments and enable me to see things in their just relations.

But again, the vision of God in the background implies not only corrected views and rectified judgments. It implies also deepened insights into the real nature of things. John Ruskin has said that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something or someone as it really is and tell what he sees in a plain way. To see clearly and distinctly, deeply, is indeed science, poetry and religion all in one. One man looks at a machine shop and sees in it a place where men with grimy hands and blackened faces are coming out and going in, turning wood, molding iron, manufacturing machinery. Another man looks at the same shop and sees a place where God is turning virtues, molding characters and training immortal souls for a wonderful future which lies before them. To one person's eye a school room shows teachers drilling some rather dull-looking children in language and numbers. To the eye of another person it is a vision of angels opening the shining gates and ushering new souls into the eternal palace of knowledge. Home shall seem to one a kind of combination eating-house and dormitory. To another home shall seem a nursery of love and sacrifice,

a school of social fellowship and duty, an image and likeness of heaven. Wherein lies the difference of these views? In the background. One person looks at things and sees in them little of interest or value because his look has no divine perspective. Another person looks at things and sees in them a hidden glory because he sees the light and purpose and beauty of God shining through them.

I remember one summer evening in Lucerne watching the operation of a powerful searchlight thrown out from the opposite summit of the Stanserhorn. I saw it flashing over the dark waves of the beautiful lake, touching with luminous fingers the chestnut trees on the quays, illuminating the quaint old bridges across the Reuss, darting up the wooded heights of the Gütsch and playing over the lovely slopes of the Drei Linden. It was like the lifting of a heavenly curtain, like the breaking of a celestial effulgence. The whole panorama of lake and mountains, brooks and bays, city and country, stood out clear, distinct, radiant, in the revealing brightness. Like that is the effect of the vision of God and the eternal upon the world. It discovers wonderful secrets, brings to light hidden treasures, interprets dark providences, shows eternal issues, and makes this whole world of men and things a kind of divine transparency.

But again, the vision of God as the abiding background of his mind ennobles a man's work and the common duties of his daily life. It does this by expelling from his mind all falsehood, dishonesty, and

every mean device. Are you a working man? Not until you look away from God can you scamp your work. Are you a tradesman? Not until you look away from God can you use false weights and measures. Are you a public official? Not until you look away from God can you carry behind you an open hand for graft. It is said that one of Robertson's congregation in Brighton used to keep the portrait of the great preacher hanging in a room behind his shop, and when he was tempted to any kind of trickery, he would go and stand before that face until the devil left him. His background was a holy human face, but it was God and eternity he saw in it all the same. You have heard the oft-repeated tale of the Italian painter who when asked why he took such excessive pains with his work replied, "I am painting for eternity. It is worth while to take pains." Perhaps he was mistaken. Perhaps he was only painting for time after all. But in another sense he had a right to say, and every one of us who is doing his daily work, however humble, in the sight of God, has a right to say, "I am working for eternity. I can do nothing meanly or slovenly."

The vision of God in the background implies honest, painstaking work. It implies also enthusiastic work. Nothing great is ever done without enthusiasm. But where is one to get enthusiasm? A man involved in the petty details and drudgery of his vocation, a woman in the treadmill of small activities and monotonous tasks, how is it possible for such ever to rise to

the height of passionate enthusiasm? I answer, by setting God and eternity before them. Look at those great cathedral-builders of the mediæval time cutting blocks of stone, shaping columns, carving figures and doing it all with the hands of wide-eyed enthusiasts. How grand they were in their toil! How happy! Their work was almost worship. They wrought their daily tasks in the spirit of a lofty consecration. Their very hammers rang *Te Deums*. Their chisels chipped glorias. What is the explanation? They looked not merely to the materials on which they were working or to the earthly paymasters who employed them. Their eyes stretched up to the Infinite. They linked their work to God and His new creation. Brethren, the great need of all kinds of work to-day is the upward look. Human industries are debased by being regarded on one side as the instruments of capitalistic greed and on the other as the mere equivalents of bread and butter. If men could see themselves and their work in the larger light of God, if they could see themselves as God's workmen and see their works as God's service, what a dignity would descend upon human labor! What enthusiasms would fill the world's workers! "Hitch your wagon to a star," says Emerson. "Hitch your work to Him who is above the stars," says St. Paul.

But again, the vision of God in the background works its effect upon our personal life and character. We grow like what we habitually look at. A life lived in the steady contemplation of God experiences the

love of God and power of God working in its inmost depths with gracious transfiguring effect. It is a wonderful thing to read such a life in a written biography, still more wonderful to come into contact with it through personal acquaintance. Some years ago I met George Müller of Bristol, England. He had the upward look. I could not but feel it. He told us in the fellowship of the home, he told us in the church, the thrilling story of his orphanages, the way they were planted and the ways they had been watered, and O how he told it! No egotism, no "I" writ large or small, and no anxiety, no worry, no frantic appeal, though thousands of homeless children were hanging upon his hands. He told the story with the simplicity of a child, with the quietness and confidence of an assured soul. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

So it was with George Müller. So it may be with us. He who fixes his eye on God finds his feet fixed on a rock. He is delivered from all wavering and panic. The shake and tremble goes out of a man who beholds the invisible. He has about his inmost heart a feeling of security, and about his entire life an atmosphere of firmness, calmness, secret strength and dauntless courage.

I see that brave young spirit, the first to die for Jesus Christ, standing in the great hall of the temple of Herod in the bloom of youth, facing a bench of hostile judges, surrounded by a vast concourse of

excited spectators—standing there while the rage deepens, while the gnashing of teeth infuriates, while the murderous stones batter and shatter his body, calm, unmoved, beautiful, his face as it had been the face of an angel, his words echoes of his Master's, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." I witness the awful tragedy. I ask the secret of Stephen's unearthly calm and courage and sublime forgiving spirit. And I find it in the testimony borne to him, "He looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of God."

Once more, the vision of God in the background works its effect upon our eternal future. It realizes and actualizes the whole circle of truths, powers and agencies which constitute the eternal world. The soul, its value and immeasurable possibilities, sin, its reality and terrible ruin, Christ, His unconquerable personality, marvelous condescension and victorious deliverance of our race, the Bible, its wondrous revelations of truth and love and immortality, eternity, its awfulness and its inconceivable glory and blessedness, these all grow upon a man and come to be more and more with him as the subjects of his thought and the objects of his affections while he lifts up his eyes on high. To his intensified eye of faith and love the spiritual world becomes as real as the natural. He grasps eternity in time. He begins to live the eternal life already.

There is a picture by Ary Scheffer at the bottom

of which are inscribed the words, "St. Augustine and his mother Monica." Two figures are leaning out on a window-sill of a house in the port of Ostia. Two rapt faces are gazing toward heaven. "We were waiting," so writes the son, "for the moment when we were to set sail. We were alone conversing with indescribable sweetness. Forgetting the past and stretching toward the future, we were asking ourselves what shall be that eternal life which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. And come aloft on the wings of love towards Him who is, we climbed as it were up through those celestial regions whence the stars, the moon and the sun send us their light. And as we thus rose in our ardent aspirations toward that life we seemed to touch it for one moment with a bound of the heart, and sighed as we left there captive the first fruits of the spirit and came back again to the sound of the voice which begins and ends. Then my mother said to me, 'My son, so far as I am concerned there is nothing more to bind me to this life. What should I do in it? There was one thing for which I desired to continue in life, and that was that I might see you a Christian before I died. My God has given me that and more than that. Why should I tarry here any longer?' " And then at the close of a conversation that soared above the confines of time and space and was a foretaste of the eternal rest, Monica immediately fell asleep in the arms of her son and upon the bosom of her Saviour.

Ah friends, we are all like those two in the window

soon to set sail. A few more days of this sweet earthly scene, a few more mornings of light and gladness, a few more evenings of fellowship and rest, a few more opportunities to do our duty, a few more hours to repent and pray, a few more joys and sorrows, smiles and tears, and you and I will have passed into the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns.

Happy, immeasurably happy and thankful shall we be if in a world of shadows we have fixed our eyes upon the visions of eternity, if in a world of sin we have personally grasped the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, if in a world of insoluble mysteries and delusions on every hand we have made the Bible our guide and lived a life of prayer, if in a world sinking down into death and the grave we have kept in view our eternal destiny and looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Addresses on
Special Occasions

ADDRESSES

Dr. Nichols' preaching was always specially planned for the winning of his people to open confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only one or two communion seasons in all the years passed without additions to the church on confession of faith, and he then felt reproachful and self-condemned that he had not won more to allegiance to his Master. The list of those not owning Christ (always carried in his pocket) was carefully studied. As the communion time drew near, each one, wherever it was possible, was approached with wisest tact; and none that heard them will ever forget the tender personal appeals made from the pulpit.

Because of this great desire to make disciples, Dr. Nichols magnified the sacrament of the Holy Communion, and the Service Preparatory to it, which was always with him a special additional service. His intensity of feeling communicated itself to the people, and an unwonted solemnity prevailed in these services. His Preparatory Lectures were not merely good talks, but specially written for distinctive phases of preparation for the sacrament. Standing at the Lord's Table in Communion, he always welcomed his people to the feast with tenderest words of faith and devotion, and his presence seemed a benediction to them even at that holy time.

On many Sundays in different years he preached

short sermons to children, which were as eagerly listened to by the children grown old as by the children themselves.

For about twenty years he was the Chaplain of the Sixth Battery of the National Guard, and when in health enjoyed preaching to the men of this organization at least once a year.

He was often sought for lectures and special services away from his home, but always felt that his whole time was not too much to give to his own church.

For many years, as Chairman of the Committee on Synodical Home Missions of the Presbytery of Binghamton, he gave much time and thought to this cause, which he esteemed vital to the best interests of the Church and the country. The smaller country and village churches were carried on his heart by the man who in his beautiful church and great congregation did not forget his country boyhood and his village pastorate. He became in a real sense the bishop of these churches, advising, encouraging, composing difficulties, providing for various needs, visiting them to preach occasional sermons. He was much resorted to by the ministers and churches of a wide region around Binghamton for counsel and help, and never in vain.

A few addresses given on occasions connected with some of the matters above referred to, and on others, are here reproduced, whole or in part, to illustrate different phases of Dr. Nichols' ministry.

SPEECH AT THE DINNER OF THE BINGHAMTON BOARD OF TRADE.

Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen of the Board of Trade:

The Binghamton Board of Trade has now fully proved the great functions of its organization and settled the question of its existence. It has eaten its first Dinner. Substantial existence cannot be predicated of any body until its capacity for taking food has been demonstrated. Just why so healthy and promising an organization as this has been kept in a state of abstinence for so long a time, I do not understand. But the critical moment is now passed. And if the gentlemen in charge have felt any uneasiness in regard to this trial, their anxieties must now all be removed, and their minds filled with pride and satisfaction. I congratulate the Binghamton Board of Trade upon its first Dinner. Many future dinners may it eat, and may it see the necessity of having a clergyman present on every occasion.

Everyone, it seems to me, must see the fitness of inviting a minister to teach manufacturers and merchants and bankers how to do their business. Indeed, I believe it is the object for which banquets are usually held, that persons who know nothing about a subject may enlighten those who have spent their life-

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time in practising it. I have noticed that the principal speakers chosen to honor the Pilgrims on Forefather's Day are usually men who were born in one of the Provinces of Canada or in Texas or in one of the South American States—men who have never set foot within the boundaries of New England in their lives and who know as much about the Puritans as about the natives of the Congo State. I observed that at the recent Dinner of the Chamber of Commerce in New York, the speakers selected to bind those merchant princes and teach those metropolitan bankers wisdom were Dr. Briggs and Bishop Potter—two men whose knowledge of business chiefly consists in preaching eleemosynary sermons, passing around the hat and drawing their salaries. But this only shows what wonderful men we clergymen are. If in the things of which we know the least, we are able to instruct the wisest, what must our knowledge be in our own special field of theology! Goldsmith understood us when he wrote

“In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill;
For e'en though vanquished he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.”

The ninth century put the whole realm of trade under ban. The very idea of trade was declared to be incompatible with the character of a gentleman and the profession of a Christian. A tradesman was

a vulgar fellow, and buying and selling was a disreputable occupation. The Council of Mayence, A. D. 813, issued capitularies prohibiting clergymen from all acts of trade and restraining religious persons from going near a market except to procure the actual necessities of life. War and warlike sports were the only pursuits thought worthy of a gentleman, and the only engagements outside of his sacred duties suitable to a clergyman were hunting and carousing.

But the ninth century was the culmination of that defection from the truth of Christianity and lapse into barbarism which we call the Dark Ages. It was not so at the beginning. So far from any antagonism between Christianity and trade, a certain affinity existed between them at first. The chosen places where Christianity first sought entrance and took root were busy commercial cities like Antioch, Corinth and Ephesus. The age of the first spread of Christianity was a commercial age. The Holy Apostles were nearly all tradesmen and our blessed Lord Himself was trained to be a handicraftsman.

Gentlemen, I wish to propose an inquiry. Is the nineteenth century again approaching the attitude of the ninth century in its condemnation of trade, with this difference, that the condemnation instead of proceeding from the Church, now proceeds from business men themselves, and instead of terminating upon the inherent nature of trade, now terminates upon the dishonest manner in which trade is carried on? To my mind a very grave accusation is laid

against trade, when it is deliberately said that no man can do business at the present time and do it successfully and at the same time be an honest man. It is a fact to startle a thoughtful man when an intelligent grocer declares that coffee and spices are now so uniformly adulterated and that spurious mixtures are so invariably sold under the names of genuine articles that no man can tell the truth about his goods and sell them for what they really are except at a positive loss. It is a thing to make us pause when a manufacturer can soberly aver that there is no money, for him or any man, in making honest goods and that the expression "an honest livelihood," in trade at least, became long ago a contradiction in terms.

Gentlemen, I feel a sense of impropriety in uttering these sentences in your presence as your guest. I seem to be somewhat in the condition of the boy who confessed on his brother. The two brothers had been straitly warned by their father against touching the fruit on a certain pear tree. But the temptation was too strong, and one night the boys robbed the tree. Shortly after one of them was treated to a terrific trouncing. He could not imagine how his father found it out, and was wondering to his brother about it, when the other, a saintly little fellow, said quite promptly, "My conscience troubled me so that I went and confessed it all to father." "You *did*," said the other, "Why then didn't you get a licking too?" "O," said he, "I confessed it on you."

But the business man confesses on himself, *not* on his brother. The charges I have repeated were all taken from the lips of tradesmen. The authors of the severest strictures upon business methods and business morals are business men themselves. This shows that the foundations are not worm-eaten as some would have us believe. This shows that there is a great deep underlying conscience in trade. It shows that men love truth and righteousness and hate lies and are determined in some way to squeeze lies out of their business. I do not know what is your plan for accomplishing this, but I rather suspect it is your idea that this is something that will not be effected by prayer alone, that it will require one to add to his faith virtue, and to his prayer works. I suspect that your doctrine here is something like that of the old colored man in Princeton who was asked by a divinity student if he had a turkey on Thanksgiving Day. "O, yes, massa," he said, "I had turkey." Upon being asked where he got it, he said, "I prayed for dat turkey, but no turkey done come. So I prayed de Lord to send me after dat turkey, and bress de Lord, I had free turkey afore mornin'."

Gentlemen, there was a time in this country when men did not look or expect to be rich in a few years. There was a time when men and women were not so very anxious to be rich, when they counted it enough to have a wholesome living, a well-furnished mind, a strong, healthy family of children and a few thousands of dollars laid aside for old age. There

was a time when there were no Napoleons in finance and men knew nothing about speculating with other people's money and escaping the payment of their debts. There was a time when men expected to thrive in no other way than by honest industry, frugal habits, careful savings, prudent investments and gradual accumulation. We cannot now return to the narrow conditions, slow movements and small operations of the past. But we can return, and we shall never be happy men and prosperous men until we do return, to the practice of the old-fashioned virtues of industry, temperance, frugality, fidelity and reasonable self-denial.

GREETING TO THE CONGREGATION.

I fancy you can hardly appreciate the joy I feel in worshipping together with you all here this morning. I am sure you would think me emotional and extravagant were I to give full expression to the feelings of my heart at this moment. I think of the experience of my boyhood when returning from a long absence at school I caught from a hilltop in the road the first glimpse of my father's house.

We have had one of the most delightful holidays of my whole life. And one of the things that has made it exceptionally delightful is that it was largely the gift of your love and generosity. The cup has been sweet because your hands mingled it. It was with a thrill of joyous surprise that we received your largesse on setting out, and every dollar seemed to be an expression of your unfailing attachment as it was spent.

The scenes also among which we traveled contributed to the enjoyment of our holiday. We spent the greater portion of our time, as we planned, in the high Alps, in Normandy and on the coast of North Devon. On another occasion I may have something to say about each one of these localities, but this morning my heart is so full of the joy of simply seeing you once more and anticipating another year of

love and labor that I have no memory of the past. You have often heard me say that the minister's lot is the happiest in the world, but never have I realized it more fully than at this moment. To work with the best people for the best objects under the best Master, what can be happier than that?

But turning to the duties of the present, I am pleased to see that devoted hands and skillful minds have been at work in my absence restoring and beautifying the rooms of the Church, and preparing all things for a new year of Church life and Church work. One has only to glance at these improvements to feel not only that a good work has been done, but that it has been done under the personal supervision of constant watchful eyes, jealous of the Church and her interests.

And now what remains but that we all, pastor and people, younger and older, men, women and children, unite in offering ourselves, body, soul and spirit to the possession and service of the Lord Jesus Christ? O friends! I feel that Jesus Christ from His Cross and from His Throne is just now making His strong and tender appeal to the whole of our life and that He is offering the whole of Himself to be appropriated by the whole of ourselves. He is offering His life to enlarge ours, His Divinity for our Humanity, His Power for our weaknesses, His victories for our defeats; and just in proportion as we grasp this fact, and believe that Jesus Christ is ours, and that He appeals to the highest and noblest in us, will He be

able to lead us into the fullness of His own power and holiness. Some of you have doubts and hesitations, some of you complain that you cannot see all things clearly. No more can I. But One we can all see, Jesus Christ, once on the Cross, now on the Throne. Let us not wait to solve doubts or to clear away our obscurities. Let us come immediately to His feet and surrender all our faith and will and whole life to Him. So will doubts dissolve themselves, and darkness become light in His presence.

“I have a life with Christ to live,
 But, ere I live it, must I wait
 Till learning can clear answer give
 Of this or that book's date?
 I have a life in Christ to live,
 I have a death in Christ to die;—
 And must I wait till science give
 All doubts a full reply?

Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
 Is raging wildly round about,
 Questioning of life and death and sin,
 Let me but creep within
 Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
 Take but the lowest seat,
 And hear Thine awful voice repeat
 In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet,
 Come unto Me, and rest;
 Believe Me, and be blest.”

APPEAL FOR FUNDS FOR THE DECORATION OF THE CHURCH.

My friends, we have felt for several years that this church, this audience room, ought to be renovated and beautified. It is now thirty-two years since these walls were first finished, and nothing, or almost nothing, has been done to them in all that time. The outside of the building was thoroughly repaired and rehabilitated two years ago, and considerable money has since been expended in perfecting the heating and ventilating apparatus, so that everything about the building may be said to be in good order for many years.

Everything except these inner walls, which remain as they were, cracked and marred and faded and stained and soiled. This was once a beautiful sanctuary. It enjoyed the distinction of being the most noble and beautiful place of God in the city. But it has come now to have a different distinction. It has come to be the most shabby and ill-conditioned of all the city churches. The remark of strangers upon entering it is no longer "What a beautiful church this is!", but "What a beautiful church this might be!" Truly it might be. This sanctuary is capable of being restored to its original eminence.

We have felt for several years, as I said, the neces-

sity of doing this work. But two years ago it was postponed for the sake of building the tabernacle for the Mills meetings. One year ago it was deferred again on account of the financial stringency of the times. This year the financial conditions are perhaps less favorable than last year. And I suppose we should have postponed this work a third time, had not a liberal member of the congregation come forward of his own will and offered to subscribe one thousand dollars toward beautifying this church, on condition that the work should be done this summer.

This the Trustees of the Society and others all felt was indeed a generous proposal, and one not to be lightly forfeited. The more it was considered the more it was felt that with such a beginning the work could be done now and done more easily than at any future time. And it was resolved to accept the offer with gratitude on behalf of the Society, and proceed at once to the work.

The first thing is to provide the funds necessary for the work. After this is done the work of beautifying the church will be put into the hands of a competent committee, who will have charge of it and will see that it is done in an acceptable manner. But the first thing is to collect the money. Estimates of the expense have already been obtained, and it is found that including such preparation for the work as the scaffolding, and including the renovation of the lecture-room, parlors, Sunday-school rooms and passageways, it will be necessary to have in hand at least

five thousand dollars. A soliciting committee has already been appointed, consisting of These gentlemen will visit personally as many of the congregation as they conveniently can, and afterwards every member of the congregation will be asked to have a part in the good work.

Now, my friends, we are going to give something to beautify this House of God, where we have received so much of all that is holiest and best in our lives, and where our children will kneel and worship and put on their garments of holiness after we have finished our labors and entered into our rest. Oh, how great these cathedral-like structures are! Great as witnesses to the undying truths of the Christian faith; greater still in their subtle silent influence over the lives of men and women, younger and older. Men rise and fall, preachers live and die; but here these walls stand above the smoke and storm, above the din of noisy streets, above things which are fair and beautiful and things which are base and mean. Here they stand, and in a manner which seems sometimes almost patient and pathetic they testify of the higher life of the soul and bear witness to the power of prayer and point to the Father's house on high. Oh, there is no object to which it is a greater satisfaction to me to give than to a noble church of Jesus Christ.

We cannot raise this money at this time without feeling it, my friends. We cannot raise it without giving to the point of self-denial, and I am not sorry for that. No giving is so dear to God and none is so

blessed to the giver as that which is mingled with self-denial. I do not know what the Master will say at the last to us ministers who never asked our people to deny themselves for Him. I do not know what the people themselves will say when they learn what they have lost in not denying themselves for the Saviour. I want you to make sacrifices. Oh, I could wish that this whole church were frescoed with sacrifice. I could wish that every window through which God's light streams in were a sacrifice-window, and that every sacred object upon which the light falls were a gift of sacrifice.

One thing more—this work is not to be done by a few. We must all claim a part in this good work. Every man and woman and child must be able to say hereafter, "I had a part in the beautifying of the place of my Saviour's Feet." There must be not only one hundred and two hundred dollar subscriptions, but also ten and five and one dollar ones.....

APPEAL FOR CONFESSION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Dear friends, I want to say a few words to some of you this morning as it were face to face. I want to ask you to settle the great question of your salvation at this time by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour and becoming His confessed followers and saved souls henceforward and forever.

I am deeply concerned for some of you. I have preached the Gospel of God's love to you year after year and have seen you coming near to the Kingdom of God and yet stopping just short of passing in. You seem to me to be standing at this moment where one decided step would bring you into the sphere of God's light and peace, and make you possessors of everlasting life. Your right convictions of truth, your attractive moral virtues, your natural associations in life, are such as bring you near to the gospel of salvation. There is but a line between you and eternal life on earth and in heaven, and one step may cross it.

I look into your faces and think of the young man whom Jesus once looked upon and loved and then said to him, "One thing thou lackest." What that young man lacked, what you lack, is that one act of free choice and deliberate decision which God never will

dispense with nor ever force upon any soul of man, the act of simply putting yourself into the hand of God's mercy and choosing and confessing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. So much you must do. Without submission and confession no man shall see the Lord. Think of going into the presence of a King to whom you have never declared your allegiance. Think of resting your eyes upon a Saviour whose dying love you have never owned by one word of confession. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

O my brother, my sister, when I see how God in great mercy has brought you near to the Gospel Feast and has placed the vacant chair at the Table and is waiting, waiting, waiting to hear you simply say, "I will take it, I receive Thee, O Lord Jesus, with all my heart and will be Thine forever"—when I think of the great overshadowing eternity and the tremendous realities of life and death, of blessedness and misery which it contains for every one of us, and then when I think that to put any one of you right with God needs but one humble noble step and that the step may be taken this hour in the secret of the soul, I cannot lay down my charge of this Church without throwing the arms of my heart around each one of you and entreating you to be reconciled to God by at once accepting and confessing Jesus Christ Whom

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He has given to be your Saviour. O friends, Jesus Christ really loves you, has loved you long. Jesus Christ died for you. Jesus Christ even now is bending over you with eyes of inexpressible solicitude. Shall He not see you deciding for Him this morning? Shall He not see you coming to His feast of love an earnest confessing Christian, the sure pledge that He has chosen you and that you will enter Heaven at last?

ADDRESS AT HOLY COMMUNION.

Once more, dear friends, we are called into our Saviour's banqueting-house. Once more His gracious voice is heard in our ears, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Be the answer of our hearts "Draw us, O Lord, and 'we will run after thee; we will rejoice and be glad in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine.'"

This feast is a reality. This approach to the Lord's table is an actual transaction between our sinful needy persons and the all-holy, all-blessed Person, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us try to master that thought in the first place. The world looks upon Jesus as dead. It regards Him as a person who once lived but is living no longer. It reads His life and death as it reads the life and death of Socrates, finding many touching and impressive things in it, but not accounting that the Author of it is at this moment a secret invisible Presence not far from any one of us and willing to manifest Himself graciously to all who seek Him in faith and love and adoration .

Dear friends, what a thought it is that we are actually coming into the immediate presence of the same divine Person whom Nicodemus visited by night, whom Mary and Martha lodged and loved at their

home in Bethany, whom St. John leaned upon at the Supper, whom so many sick and helpless in Galilee sought and not one was turned empty away! What holy awe, what reverence, what faith, what expectation, ought to fill and animate our inmost souls! Nothing seems to me so sad and sinful too as that we should come to this feast and go away unblessed simply for not realizing what we are doing, for not setting our minds upon its significance and opening our hearts to believe that which is freely given unto us.

But I will tell you what I have found. I have found that I never feel Christ to be a reality in this sacrament until I first feel Him to be a necessity. Just in proportion as I know my need of Him I am made to know His grace to me. He presents Himself to me as I present myself to Him. When I come to this table sensible of my utter ill-desert and utter impenitence, feeling that I am wholly lost and that Christ is all there is left to me, conscious that I deserve nothing and almost fearing to ask or expect anything, precisely at such times, when I am at my lowest, Christ appears at His greatest, arrayed in the full honors of His infinite compassion and almighty sufficing. He gives me pardon and righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. He gives me a sense of union with Himself in an eternal friendship. The sacrament becomes a real and blessed intercourse of spirit with spirit, of want with grace, of the human with the divine.

Another thing I have found. I have found that both my necessity and Christ's reality are then most felt by me when I dwell most thoughtfully and thankfully upon His sufferings in my behalf. It is very happy to gather inside of the Christian sanctuary and sit down with one another in holy fellowship under the sheltering atonement of our Saviour and the protecting favor of our heavenly Father. Very happy, but ah, dear friends, it has cost something. It has cost something to give us this table, this communion of the saints, these spiritual positions, these heavenly hopes. Gethsemane and Pilate's judgment-hall and Golgotha gave us these. We sit here to-day and confess our sins and put away our fears and rejoice in hopes because the Son of God hung on three great wounds until He died.

But while we think with awe and amazement of the expense of our salvation we must also think with confidence and satisfaction of its completeness. No wonder this is a great and incomprehensible feast. No wonder that gifts of pardon and eternal life are bestowed here freely as the sun gives light and the clouds rain. No wonder that for the chief of sinners forgiveness is made ready and joy prepared. This is a feast of the sacrifice of the equal and eternal Son of God.

One thought further which comes with the season. It is our last communion service of the year. Six more of these gifts of the Son of God are numbered with the things of the past. It is no inconsiderable

portion of the longest life among us. To some it is undoubtedly more than remains. Let us seek to-day fuller and higher consecration. These offered tokens encourage us. They promise forgiveness for the past and strength for a higher, holier life in the future. They assure us that if we will but believe and give ourselves wholly up to seek God's pleasure and to do His will we shall be able at life's end to say with confidence "It is finished," not with our own feeble tremulous voice, but in the strong full-toned resonant cry of our Lord and Redeemer.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

A Children's Sermon.

Something happened the other day, or rather something was said about preaching to children and about the effect of a sermon to children in this Church, that made me think I should like to take up again my custom of speaking a few words to you boys and girls at this point in the service. And when I asked myself "What shall I speak about?" one thing ran up and crowded all others back, saying "Speak to the children about me, speak about me." The thing which so took possession of me and asked for speech was The Love of God. This is what Solomon said of love, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." And this is what an old African woman, who had known about the love of God from a missionary, said:—"If I were to go to yonder forest and cut down all the trees and make a long, long ladder of them and then take it and set it upon the highest mountain, I could not reach the top of God's love. And if I were to dig all the iron out of the earth and make the longest of long chains and then go down with it into a deep well, I could not get to the bottom of God's love. It is like the sunlight at noonday,

Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, 1898.

all around you and above you and before you and behind you. It is forgiveness and strength and gladness, and to believe it is to be saved."

Love is of two kinds or orders, a higher and a lower, and one creates the other. There is the love which God has to us, and there is the love which we have or ought to have to God and to one another. It is the former, it is God's love to us, which is the wonderful thing. One told me the other day of a little boy who asked his mother "Do you love me?" "Of course I do," she replied, kissing him again and again. "Put your hand to my heart and feel how full it is of love for you." "Yes, I'm sure it is there," he replied, "but I want to hear it come out in speaking, I do."

Would you, children, like to hear God's love for you come out in speaking? You have only to think of the Lord Jesus, how He came out of God's heaven and was born in a stable and laid in a manger and spent His life doing good and died on the Cross for us. Yes, this is the way of it. God is love. God's infinite unfathomable heart is full of love to you, to me, to all, and when He took out of His bosom all the Son He had and freely gave Him up for us all, that was just God's love coming out in speaking so that we could hear it down here and believe it and be saved by believing it. And this is what it is and all it is to be a Christian. It is to believe this love which God has to us and has spoken out to us in Christ. It is to believe the great love of God and let it flow

from the Cross of Christ into our hearts, taking away all our sins, filling us to the brim and constraining us to say, "O Thou who lovest me with everlasting love, take me, and make me good and useful."

Children, when we have received this great love of God into our hearts, we can no longer be hard and wicked and selfish. The new heart is given us—we forget about self and think about pleasing the Lord Jesus and making others happy for His sake. I think I can make this plain to you by a story.

It is about the master of a ship who was sailing in the African Seas and had aboard his vessel a lot of rescued slaves. They were poor, ignorant, unclean things, naked, black, and almost as hideous as the gorillas that swing about in the trees of Africa. They were being carried back to their native land, from which they had been stolen. They were lying about in heaps, fed like animals and despised and shunned by the very men who had rescued them.

The negroes understood that they were being carried back to their homes to be set free, and they were glad of that, but they were not happy, for they felt they were despised by the Englishmen, and they were human beings with hearts that could suffer. One bright still day as the ship was slowly moving over the placid sea there was heard a thud and a splash. It could only mean one thing. One of the slaves had fallen overboard. The man nearest to the spot and first to see it was the master of the ship. He was dressed in the uniform of his rank, he belonged to a

noble family, he was a graduate of a great University and had his admiralty certificates. But in one second he was nothing but a man. He forgot his degrees, his honors, his expectations. He forgot the great weight of the helpless creature struggling in the water. He forgot that the sea was full of sharks. He forgot everything but the drowning man. Off went his cap, his coat, and down into the water plunged the officer. In an instant busy hands were slackening the ship and lowering a boat while others were leaning over the ship's side with pointed guns reading to fire at the sharks. Hearts stood still. Men held their breath. Seconds seemed like hours while that brave captain was matching what seemed a worthless negro with his own skill and strength and imperilled life. Finally he slowly rose to the surface with his heavy burden. A boat was instantly at the spot and strong hands drew him up with the negro into the boat and rowed them back to the ship. Then when the master appeared on the ship and the negroes all saw him wet and exhausted from saving one of them from death a strange impulse took hold of them. They began to breathe deep low sounds, they crept near him, they stroked his legs, they touched his hand with their finger-tips, they knelt and bowed their faces at his feet, they wept like children, he was so beautiful, so divine to them. They saw in him the love of God coming out in speaking—he was an image of the Crucified.

When the officer arrived in England he found that

his deed had somehow gone before him. The nation had honored him and the Royal Humane Society was waiting to pin a medal on him. But a brighter medal was the approval of Heaven and the pleasure in him which the Lord Jesus pinned on his self-sacrificing heart. Boys and girls of this congregation, what have you done for Him who leaped into the sea of your sins' consequences and rescued your souls from everlasting death? The Royal Society of Heaven has pinned a medal upon Him. But what have you done? O, I tell you that dearer to Him than the medals of the angels would it be for you, boys and girls, to give your hearts to Him.

“Glory to God in the highest.”

REPORT ON SYNODICAL HOME MISSIONS.

Moderator and Brethren:

No Presbytery in the State of New York has greater reason to be interested in Synodical Home Missions than the Presbytery of Binghamton. No other Presbytery has so large a proportion of its churches dependent on Synodical aid. Of the 32 churches in our Presbytery, 15 are found on the roll of Synodical Home Missions and two or three more are approaching it. A full half of our Presbytery is simply one broad mission field.

Now we all appreciate the need of missions in foreign lands and the need of missions in the far west. That need has the magic of romance upon it. That need is sounded in our ears every day in the year by the most eloquent tongues of the church and nation and it cannot be sounded too often or too loudly. But here is a need invested with no glamour of romance, voiced by no golden tongues, a low plaint which we scarcely hear because it is so close at hand. It has been observed by an earnest pleader for Synodical Missions as a strange thing in some human nature that a cry which comes from afar seems much more affecting and appealing than when it is heard from the next door. With some, as he remarks, "The need of Synodical Missions is not far enough away to

Presented to the Presbytery of Binghamton on April 15, 1907.

be appreciated." It is only over there in the next town. It is only in that little hamlet we have always known so well. Synodical Missions is like a prophet in his own country, without honor, but not without a special claim to be heard.

Consider the claim of Synodical Missions, what it is. It is a family cry. It has the accent of a household plea. It is the obligation to care for our own. They are our own kith and kin, our own neighboring communities, places where some of us were born, twice born, after the flesh and after the Spirit, these little country churches which year by year are being impoverished and reduced by having their life blood drained away to the cities.

They are our own comrades and chums, educated with us in the same college and seminary, bound up with us as brothers beloved in the same Presbyterian fraternity, these missionary ministers who are figuring and economizing and foregoing in trying to do the work of their churches faithfully and maintain their families on salaries of six hundred, five hundred, four hundred dollars a year.

Brethren, it is time we awoke to a fuller appreciation of the difficulties and discouragements of the ministers and memberships of our mission churches. The ministers are isolated, without the sympathetic touch of brother clasping the hand of brother to inspire and reinforce, without the surrounding atmosphere of responsiveness to aspirations and ideals to kindle and inflame, too often without, with shame be

it said, sufficient salaries, for what? To set their minds at ease and liberate their powers; to lay on their tables a new book now and then; to taste the invigorations of an occasional holiday? No, not that, but without sufficient salaries to meet the first necessities of their households and to live and dress in such a manner as to save them from humiliation in their own eyes and disrespect in the eyes of the community.

And not only the ministers but the rural population themselves are isolated and depressed by hard work, by bad roads, by constant removal of helpful families, by invasion of foreign immigrants who care the least for the interests of religion and traditions of the church, by increasing indifference, illiteracy and degeneracy. It is a pathetic sight if ever was one, a church once strong and enthusiastic in its aims, hopes and labors, once the cherished home and object of faithful men and devoted women, gradually falling into decay, growing weaker and weaker and finally uttering its expiring breath from deserted aisles, broken windows, and closed doors. These are the conditions which Synodical Missions has to deal with, which this agency alone is trying to meet, and thus helping to solve what is called "the rural problem."

But, brethren, this is only one aspect of the matter. There is another side. No grander opportunity is there in the world, no higher work, than that which is given to the missionary minister in these days. For what is given him? The people who belong to his little church and whom he sees before him from Sun-

day to Sunday? The minister who limits his vision and bounds his field in that way will be pretty sure to carry about a sad countenance and a poor opinion of his opportunity. But the minister who bounds his parish by all the people within his reach whether in the church or out of it, the minister who feels as Calvin felt in Geneva that his opportunity is not seized and his joy is not fulfilled until "Through center and through outskirts every household is touched, every household believes, every household prays," such a Synodical missionary, whether in town or country, will never be without a great divine feeling of the importance of his position and the magnitude of his work.

Such a Synodical missionary will have all the flaming ardor, all the quenchless passion for men, all the conscious nothingness in himself and conscious omnipotence in Christ which any foreign missionary ever had. For he will be a shepherd caring not only for his little flock of saved souls, but a shepherd going out in the regions beyond and scouring the hills and valleys for the unsaved and unsought.

..... (Financial details.)

The Committee has asked itself and asked the Presbytery what course it should pursue in order to save our missionaries from disappointment. Presbytery has already answered this question by adopting a courageous resolution which directs the Committee to add ten per cent. to the various amounts required of the churches in the present apportionment. This

means that where the Committee has written \$20 as the church quota, the church shall write \$22, where it has asked \$70, the church shall respond with \$77, where it has apportioned \$100 the church shall make its apportionment \$110.

Brethren, will you do this? Will you all do it? Will you go home and lay this matter before your congregations and plead with them for the sake of the cause of Christ in our weak churches, and for the sake of our half-supported missionary ministers, to be generous and bear the burdens of others and so fulfil the law of Him who died for us all?

G. PARSONS NICHOLS,
Chairman.

AN ORDINATION CHARGE.

It is among the traditional usages of our church, that after a young man has been set apart to the holy ministry by the laying on of the hands of presbytery, a solemn charge is delivered to him with reference to his duties and obligations.

The word charge has a somewhat ominous sound. To deliver a charge to a person gives the impression of standing off and handing down to him his duties and the obligations to their faithful performance.

But I do not wish to stand off from you to-night, my son, I wish to stand by your side as a comrade and companion in service. Nor do I wish to charge you. To inspire, to encourage, to open a new view of your work, to speak some word by which the ministry should be exalted in your sight and endeared to your heart forever, would be a joy indeed. But for charging I have small heart.

But though I may not deliver a charge I would like to speak a few words with you about this ministry in which by the grace of God both of us are now servants. What a great, solemn, blessed ministry it is! So great that no human being can measure it, so solemn that if its responsibilities were fully weighed perhaps few persons would venture it, so blessed that archangels wish to engage in it. It is

Given at the ordination of Robert Hastings Nichols, in the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, October 11, 1901.

the consecration of a life to the service of men in their moral and spiritual interests. Its first, its most important work is preaching. No other work of the ministry compares with that of the pulpit. To make his pulpit his throne, to concentrate all his intellectual and spiritual forces upon his message, to make it the business and joy of his life to preach, is the secret of a successful minister. "What is your hobby?" a lady asked Dr. Joseph Parker. "Preaching," he replied. "Yes, I know, but apart from that." "Madam, there is nothing apart from that."

What is preaching? Preaching is telling men the good news that God has redeemed this world through Jesus Christ. Preaching is proclaiming the truth of God for man's redemption as it is revealed in the Bible, embodied in Jesus Christ, illustrated, confirmed, corroborated by all nature, all science, all history, all philosophy, all art, all things in heaven and earth. Preaching is God's power for the salvation of mankind in this life and in that to come.

We are told that we make too much of preaching. We are told that we ought to depend more upon beautiful music, gorgeous robes, solemn services, imposing ceremonies. The whole question turns on another question—What is God's method of saving lost men? If His method be music and robes and ceremonies, if these things rather than preaching be the power of God unto salvation, then we certainly ought to quit preaching and devote ourselves to bands and vestments and celebrations. But if St. Paul is right,

if God has determined to save men by the foolishness of preaching, then we must preach on and never quit preaching until the whole world is brought into allegiance to Jesus Christ.

In thinking what you and I need most to preach the Gospel as it ought to be preached, comes first to my mind this, a Christ-filled life. By a Christ-filled life I do not mean any second visitation of the Holy Ghost or any new refinement of doctrine or experience. I mean a life quickened, illumined, energized by the indwelling presence and power of Christ through the Holy Spirit. I mean a burning heart of divine love, a soul aflame with the passion of glorifying God and winning souls for Jesus Christ.

Dr. Whyte, of St. George's, Edinburgh, tells us how as a young minister he thought the preaching power was the principal thing, but it was not until after years of groping he learned that preaching power has its chief root in spiritual life. We hear about a blight upon the ministry. We hear about ministers who after leaving the seminary sink down year by year into a lowered tone of thought and aspiration, into a dimming vision of truth and duty, into a narrowed sphere of service and usefulness. We hear about ministers becoming spent forces in middle life. The reason is they do not see enough of God. It is a blight of low spirituality. He who keeps the sacred fire burning in his own heart will never lose the power of kindling other hearts with life and heat. Christ-filled preachers are life-imparting preachers.

But there is no preaching power where there is no spirituality.

The second great thing of which I feel we ministers have need is a firm grip of the Bible as the Word of God and a strong intellectual conception of the system of divine truth which the Bible contains. It is a happy thing that we have not to preach to needy men our poor shallow selves, that we have a great divine human Person to preach and a system of bright effulgent facts and truths round that Person. In the transcendent facts of Jesus Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection; in the wonderful truths revealed by Jesus Christ and His apostles concerning God, man, sin, grace, salvation, repentance, faith, love, the Holy Spirit, the future everlasting life, in these is hidden the power of Christianity, the power of preaching. The minister who grasps with head and heart these heaven-given facts and truths will not only be a strong man himself, he will help others to be strong and happy and he will never exhaust his subject. But the preacher who fails to draw from these eternal spring-heads is doomed to failure as surely as one of our summer brooks is doomed to run dry in July.

Effective preaching comes of vigorous thinking and whole-souled believing in God's word. "Nothing odd lasts," says Dr. Johnson. "Nothing odd lasts." But the old old Book lasts, the great dear sad Cross lasts, and just as long as we bring the Book and the Cross to man's need, man's sin, man's

heart-hunger, our preaching will last. But where the Bible is treated as mere literature and the Cross is hidden out of sight, where thought is vague and faith is dead, there may continue to be reasoning and moralizing, but *preaching* which is the power of God unto salvation cannot possibly be. It has been said that "the true preacher is he who deals out to his people his own life passed through the fire of thought." The statement contains at once a positive error and a profound truth. The error is the assumption that the preacher deals out his own life. The profound truth is the implication that whatever a man really preaches to others must first have passed through the fire of his own thought and fed his own soul. We are not merely mouth organs and trumpets, my brother. The truth of God is not merely taken into our intellects and blown out through our mouths. If we be real genuine preachers, our message, before ever we utter it, has gone down into all the deepest places of our life and experience and so goes out from us informed and infused with all the strength of conviction and fire of earnestness that is in us. We will revise Dr. Clifford's statement, and say the true preacher is he who deals out to his people the truth and grace of God passed through the fires of his own thought and experience .

There is another thing we need in order to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as it ought to be preached. We need a spirit of abounding sympathy with men. Our message must "not only thrill with

heaven but throb with earth.” Think what a heart of sympathy pulsated in every tone and quivered in every look of the Lord Jesus. Think how graciously He preached on the mountain sides and by the lake shores of Galilee. We read that the people wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. It is said that the people pressed around Him to hear the word of God. Do you not suppose that they would press around us if we could preach it as simply, as lovingly, as sympathetically as He did?

What does the modern pulpit want? Why do not more people go to church? One says it is this, another says it is that. Many reasons are given, but I believe we lack one thing. I believe every church in Binghamton would be filled morning and evening if we ministers had hearts so full of all sympathy with men that we seemed to bring God right down to their sides as a Friend and Helper in every time of need. Said Henry Ward Beecher, “You can open a church in a barn and let a voice go out from it that has the power of touching men, and you will find it crowded and thronged.” It is true—men want to be touched. If we ministers do not think too much of the intellect, we do at least think too little of the heart. We preach as if men were all brain, but the fact is they are heart and quivering sensibility. People have longings, yearnings, sorrows. Only a few people care about elaborate arguments and fine writing. The great mass of people want God brought down to their weary heavy-laden hearts—men want

sympathy, O they want it. Five sentences spoken out of a heart full of burning love for souls are worth more than a whole sermon of ingenious conclusions and painfully rounded periods. Who was it that wrote

“It is the heart and not the brain
That to the highest doth attain”—

It is a mistake. It is the heart soaking through the brain that to the highest doth attain.

Sympathy, the power of so putting myself in others' places and others' lives, the gift of so taking up into my heart others' sins and sorrows and bearing them on my heart that every look and act of mine seems to say, “Who is weak and I am not weak? Who suffers and I am not in pain? Who is made to stumble and I burn not?”—what marvelous insight a man so endowed has! What eyes to see hidden tears! What ears to hear dumb sorrows! And how such a man brings the heavenly into the earthly and the divine near to the human when he preaches! It has been said that a preacher without sympathy is a bird without wings. He is worse than that—he is a bird without a song, a messenger without a message, an angel without his radiance upon him. It is sympathy, divine sympathy in the preacher you love to hear which makes you feel when you leave the church that the Christ has been really with you.

Do you remember Jean Ingelow's poem, “Brothers and a Sermon”?

“I have heard many speak, but this one man,
So anxious not to go to Heaven alone—
This one man I remember, and his look,
Till twilight overshadowed him. He ceased,
And out in darkness with the fisher folk
We passed, and stumbled over mounds of moss,
And heard but did not see the passing beck.
Ah! graceless heart, would that it could regain
From the dim store-house of sensations past
The impress full of tender awe, that night,
Which fell on me. It was as if the Christ
Had been drawn down from Heaven to track us home,
And any of the footsteps following us
Might have been His.”

We have need of another element to preach Jesus Christ as He ought to be preached. We need to be enthusiasts, genuine soulful enthusiasts for Christ. How can we hold up before the world the great Enthusiast from Heaven unless our lives have been touched with the chrism from on high? Theologians can teach theology, philosophers can discourse upon philosophy, and moralists can moralize. But to preach Jesus Christ needs a man so full of enthusiasm for Christ and for humanity that it tingles to the ends of his fingers and overruns everything. Fire kindles fire. Life propagates life. Energy creates energy. St. Paul full of Jesus Christ, quivering in every fibre of his intense nature at the sight of the sacrifice of the Cross, burning like a torch held aloft with love for souls, what a power is such a man to rescue lost men and draw them up upon the Rock of Ages! I am told that by some clergymen it is not thought good

form to be enthusiastic. God pity the manikins with white ties! Shall the hills run down with streams when the sun touches the snow upon them, shall the vine burst into leaves and the grass into greenness and all the birds into singing when the new life of spring rushes through them, and shall human souls whom God has touched with the love of Christ and made ambassadors to their lost brothers, be ashamed to break into glowing utterances and fiery spiritual ardors for Him who loved them and died for them? Think of the enthusiasm which Columbus felt for discovery, which Raphael felt for art, which Darwin felt for science, which Carlyle felt for reality. Is there no reason why ministers should be enthusiasts for Christ?

We read how Francis of Assisi in the flower of his age, young, rich, brave, waked one night on the eve of conflict, his sword and shield and armor shining in the moonlight, and heard a voice saying "For whom are you going to fight, Francis? You are going to fight for a fellow creature, but I am your Lord, your Creator, your God—I ask you to come and fight for Me." The young knight sprang from his bed, battled in vain with that peremptory vision, and finally, throwing himself on his knees, cried, "I am thine, to thee I consecrate my life." From that hour to his dying day Francis of Assisi was an enthusiast for Christ. And O what a light he was in those dark days! What wonders he wrought! How the very animals, the beasts and birds, loved him! O let us

try to give God more room in us every day, and let us try to do more every day for our Master to whom we owe all things. It seems to me I have never made any real sacrifice for Christ. I will never say that if I had been a lawyer or a physician or a business man I might have acquired wealth and distinction and influence. I will confess that I owe the best gifts I have and the richest results of my life to the ministry of the Cross of Christ. Serving Jesus Christ as His messenger to my fellow men has made me all that I am, and ought to have made me a great deal more than I am.

My son, I have waited for this hour. I thank God for sparing my life to see it. It is a solemnly happy hour in my existence. Still more must it be in yours. From this night to the night of your death lies a reach of life unlike any part of your life hitherto. In a real deep sense your life begins to-night. In the new relation with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the new relation with your fellow men which you have entered to-night, lies all that to you can make the difference between a life nobly laid out and a wasted one, between the conqueror's consciousness of having fought a good fight and the sense of failure and defeat.

But while you realize deeply the solemnities of this hour let nothing hide from your eyes the vision of the All-merciful Saviour bending over you with tenderest interest and sympathy, and longing to help you to make this ministry what He intended it to be, "the greatest blessing He ever gave the world."

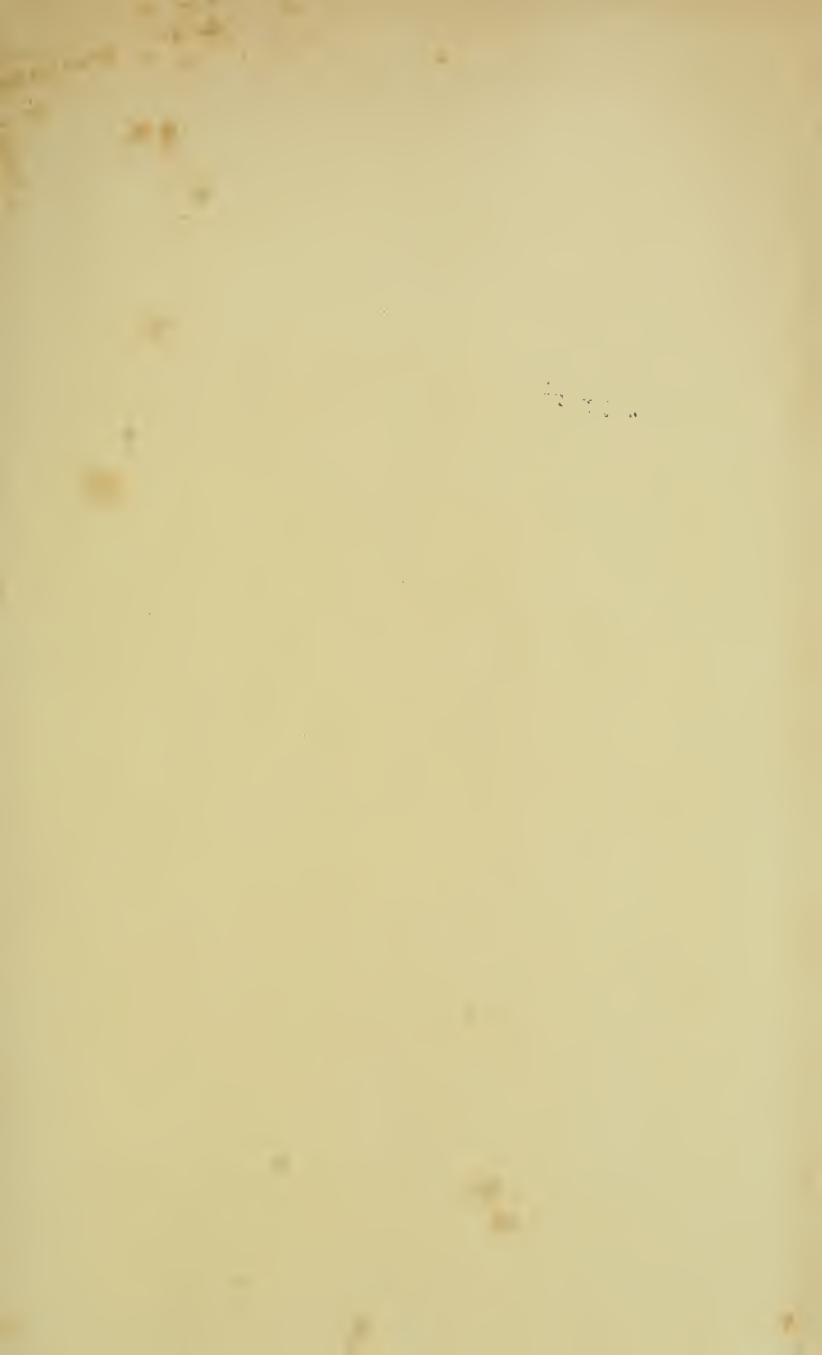
May He help you to be a better minister than I have been. May He help you to have larger thoughts of His truth and grace, to have more self-forgetting love for the souls of men, to advance where we have paused, to plant the Cross on heights which we have failed to reach and to do nobly the work which some of us, alas, have done so poorly and unworthily. May He help you to do His work, to glorify His Name, to win souls for His crown, and to have at last His approving word "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

DATE DUE

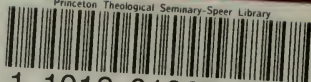
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